Romanising Oriental Gods

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Romanising Oriental Gods

Myth, Salvation and Ethics in the Cults of Cybele, Isis and Mithras

by

Jaime Alvar

Translator and editor

Richard Gordon

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Φθέγξομαι οἷς θέμις ἐστί, θύρας δὲ ἐπίθεσθε βέβηλοι.

'Orpheus' as cited by Aristobulus ap. Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 13.12.5 (vol. XII–XIII p. 312 des Places) = 247 Kern = 378 F Bernabé

Quippe cum transactis vitae temporibus iam in ipso finitae lucis limine constitutos, quis tamen tuto possint magna religionis committi silentia, numen deae soleat elicere et sua providentia quodam modo renatos ad novae reponere rursus salutis curricula.

The chief priest, in Apuleius, *Met.* 11.21

I will not say that the tragic world-view was everywhere completely destroyed by this intruding un-Dionysian spirit: we only know that it had to flee from art into the underworld as it were, in the degenerate form of a secret cult.

Fr. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1884) §17

To Pablo and Irene Alvar Rozas,
whose lives have given mine a new dimension

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FOREWORD

This book has been a long while in the making. During that time I have been the beneficiary of generous support, for which it is an inadequate repayment. The Dirección General de Investigación Científica y Técnica has supported my group of researchers with grants for specific projects continuously since 1990. This assistance has been essential both in the process of actually writing the book and for the doctoral theses that grew up around it. Other institutions have also contributed financial help towards its completion. The CSIC gave me one of its bursaries as part of a programme of exchanges with the British Academy. A grant from the Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid allowed me to spend several months at the Institute of Classical Studies in London and in Cambridge in 1992. Thanks to the generosity of the Universidad Complutense and the Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia I was able to spend time at the Centre d'Histoire Ancienne at Besançon in 1993, and at the École Normale Supérieure in the rue d'Ulm in 1994. The Junta de Andalucía financed my visits to the Faculty of Classics in Cambridge over the years I was a professor in Andalusia. However the decisive impulse to finish the book was given by a sabbatical granted by the University of Huelva for the academic year 1999–2000, which I was able to spend at the Classics Faculty in Cambridge. I have been made very welcome at the Library of the DAI in Madrid, and two excellent libraries of the Universidad Complutense, the well-stocked Biblioteca de Clásicas and the amazing Biblioteca de Humanidades, have likewise been of great help.

Thanks to all this institutional generosity I have been lucky enough to make friends with a number of fine historians. I must mention here the unforgettable Pierre Lévêque, and Monique Clavel-Lévêque, at Besançon, and Marguerite Garrido-Hory, Jacques Annequin and Antonio Gonzales, whom I am proud to call my friends. At Cambridge Keith Hopkins opened many doors to me; his death in 2004 has caused me great sadness. It was there too that I met Richard Gordon, who helped to re-direct me when I was at a loss and who has been a source of constant stimulation thereafter. Not only did he patiently correct the manuscript of the first edition in Spanish, but he agreed to write a Foreword to that version; and has now compounded his help

by undertaking to translate the entire book into English and subject it to critical scrutiny. His generous updating of the discussion of many topics and addition of much new bibliography have made this English version not a mere translation of the old book, but a truly new edition. He knows how very grateful I am to him. I would also like to express my gratitude to Henk Versnel and his colleagues on the editorial board of the series Religions in the Graeco-Roman World for kindly agreeing to publish the English version as the first contribution to that series on the central topic of its predecessor, M.J. Vermaseren's EPROER.

I am glad here also to be able to acknowledge my debts to all the colleagues at my various universities, the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, at Huelva, Pablo de Olavide (Seville) and Carlos III, again in Madrid, who have contributed so much to the formation of my thinking and to the arguments of this book.

My final thanks go to Pilar Rozas, who made it possible for me over many years to devote so much of my time to research.

December 2007 Universidad Carlos III de Madrid

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Surprising as it may seem, this book was originally intended as an introductory text for Spanish university students. To this end, the original version was equipped with various glossaries and aids that have been omitted here. The present version is directed rather to the academic community. Since it is not intended as in any sense an external history of these cults, the distribution-maps have been omitted; specialists can consult the perfectly adequate maps in Vermaseren's *CCCA* and *CIMRM*, and L. Bricault's excellent Isiac *Atlas* (Bricault 2001), which sets new standards for such cartographic enterprises. There are many other changes too. My main aim has been to turn Alvar's Spanish into straightforward academic English. This is emphatically a version and not a literal translation. Moreover, I have suggested many changes to the argument, called attention to new work, advised omissions, and generally intervened in the text so as to fit the work for a new academic audience. Moreover some passages in the original appear to a non-Spaniard to be tilting at windmills. Even when these have been eased out, there may still be some oddities in tone (the undertaking to translate the book was an act of friendship, not necessarily an endorsement of the content). Alvar too has himself contributed a number of alterations and additions, so that the translation amounts to a thoroughly revised edition.

As far as practicable and illuminating, citations are now given in the original Greek or Latin, sometimes (when straightforwardly comprehensible) untranslated. The rather odd dual system of footnotes and endnotes in the original has been replaced by a unified system of notes at the foot of the page, so that it will be difficult to locate any given footnote in the original; there are also, especially in Chap. 4, many new footnotes. I have retained Alvar's practice of placing epigraphs before each section, but where possible have returned them to their original languages. The cumbrous practice in the original of citing bibliographic entries in full both in the notes and in a consolidated bibliography (though there were many exceptions) has been replaced by the system employed by RGRW, whereby the consolidated bibliography contains only items cited more than once, with everything else either to be found in the list of abbreviations in the prelims or cited in full in the footnotes. The consolidated bibliography can therefore be used

neither as an accurate judge of what Alvar has read nor what he has not: it is simply a list of items that meet a technical requirement. I have however not been able to bring myself to employ the stipulated forms BCE and CE for the time-honoured BC and AD.

In view of its target audience, the original edition had 77 rather poor-quality illustrations. Since it is Brill's policy only to publish illustrations required by the argument, the number has been greatly reduced, and they are mostly different from those of the original. The new illustrations are mainly Mithraic: the argument in the sections devoted to Isis and the Mater Magna almost never depends upon images; in the case of Mithras, where archaeological evidence is anyway of much greater importance, it often does. We are very grateful to all the museums, other organisations, and individuals for their kind co-operation. The Spanish Ministry of Education handsomely provided a substantial grant-in-aid for the translation; and has been very forgiving of the delays in readying the text for the press. Much of the considerable labour involved in preparing this new edition was carried out at two institutions, the Getty Villa in Pacific Palisades, Los Angeles, and the Saxo Institute of the University of Copenhagen. To colleagues and staff at both I extend my grateful thanks.

January 2008 Universität Erfurt

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations (acronyms) for some frequently-cited books, collective works and series are listed below. The epigraphic abbreviations not listed here will be found in F. Bérard et al., *Guide de l'épigraphiste*[3] (Paris 2000) with the downloadable supplements. Abbreviations employed in the bibliography for specialist journals mainly conform to those used in *L'Année Philologique*, sometimes expanded for ease of comprehension, so that they need not be repeated here.

AE	*L'Année épigraphique*
ANRW	H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* (Berlin and New York 1970–)
Atlas	L. Bricault, *Atlas de la diffusion des cultes isiaques (IV^e siècle av. J.-C.–IV^e siècle apr. J.-C.)* (Paris 2001)
Ausstellung Liebighaus:	H. Beck, P. Bol, M. Bückling (sub cura), *Ägypten, Griechenland, Rom: Abwehr und Berührung. Städelsches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie (Liebighaus, Frankfurt a.M.), Katalog der Austellung 26. Nov. 2005–26. Feb. 2006* (Frankfurt a.M. and Tübingen 2005)
Barrington	R.J.A. Talbert (ed.), *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (Princeton 2000)
BEFAR	Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome
BEHE	Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études
CAH	*The Cambridge Ancient History*
CCCA	M.J. Vermaseren, *Corpus cultus Cybelae Attidisque*. EPROER 50/1–7 (Leyden 1977–89)
Chantraine	P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: Histoire des mots.* 4 vols. (Paris 1968–80)
CIL	*Corpus inscriptionum latinarum* (Berlin 1863–)
Collezioni egizie	F. Manera and C. Mazza, *Le collezioni egizie del Museo Nazionale Romano* (Rome 2001)
CPG	E.L. Leutsch and F.G. Schneidewin (eds.), *Corpus paroemiographorum graecorum*. 2 vols. (Göttingen 1839–51)

CPL	R. Cavenaile (ed.), *Corpus Papyrorum Latinarum* (Wiesbaden 1958)
D-K	H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker. Griechisch und Deutsch*[10] (Berlin 1960)
DNP	H. Cancik and H. Schneider (eds.), *Der Neue Pauly*. 16 vols. in 19 (Stuttgart and Weimar 1996–2003)
DTM	J. Blänsdorf (ed.) 2008. Forschungen zum Mainzer Isis- und Mater-Magna-Heiligtum, 1: Die Defixionum tabellae des Mainzer Isis- und Mater-Magna-Heiligtums (DTM). Mainzer Archäologische Schriften, 1 (Mainz).
EJMS	*Electronic Journal of Mithraic Studies*: <www.clas.canterbury.ac.nz/ejms>
EpDatHeid	Epigraphische Datenbank Heidelberg: http://www.uni-heidelberg. de/institute/sonst/adw/edh
EPROER	Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain, series edited by M.J. Vermaseren. 113 vols. in 145 (150) (Leyden 1961–1990)
Ernout-Meillet	A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine. Histoire des mots*[4] (Paris 1967)
FGrH	F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Leyden 1923–58, cont'd by a variety of other scholars from 1994–)
FRH	H. Beck and U. Walter (eds.), *Die frühen römischen Historiker* (Darmstadt 2001–4)
Garland	A.S.F. Gow and D.L. Page (eds., comm.), *The Greek Anthology: Garland of Philip and some Contemporary Poems* (Cambridge 1968)
HAaW	A.-M. Wittke, E. Ohlshausen and R. Szydlak, *Historischer Atlas der antiken Welt*. DNP Supplement 3 (Stuttgart and Weimar 2007)
Hellenistic Epigrams	A.S.F. Gow and D.L. Page (eds., comm.), *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams* (Cambridge 1965)
Helbig[4]	W. Helbig, *Führer durch die öffentlichen Sammlungen klassischer Altertümer in Rom*.[4] 4 vols. (Tübingen 1963–72)
IAH	F.P. Bremer, *Iurisprudentiae Antehadrianae quae supersunt*. 3 vols. in 2 (Leipzig 1896–1901)
IESS	*International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*
IG	*Inscriptiones graecae* (Berlin 1903–)

ILAquit	*Inscriptions latines d'Aquitaine* (Bordeaux 1994–)
ILS	H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones latinae selectae*. 3 vols. in 5 (Berlin 1892–1916)
InscrIt	*Inscriptiones Italiae*
Kern *OF*	O. Kern, *Orphicorum Fragmenta* (Berlin 1922)
LÄg	W. Helck, E. Otto and W. Westendorf (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*. 6 vols. (Stuttgart 1975–86)
LIMC	H.C. Ackermann and J.R. Gisler (eds.), *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*. 8 vols. in 16 (Zürich 1981–1999)
LSCG	F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques*. Travaux et mémoires de l'École fr. d'Athènes 9 (Paris 1969)
LSJ[9]	H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, H. Stuart Jones and R. McKenzie (eds.), *A Greek-English Lexicon with a revised Supplement* (P.G.W. Glare ed.) (Oxford 1996)
LTUR	M. Steinby (ed.), *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae.* 6 vols. (Rome 1993–2000)
Migne, *PG*	J.P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia graeca.* 161 vols. (Paris 1857–66 and frequently reprinted)
Migne, *PL*	J.P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia latina.* 221 vols. (Paris 1844–64 and frequently reprinted)
Mostra Iside	E.A. Arslan (ed.), *Iside: Il mito, il mistero, la magia. Catalogo della Mostra, Milano, Palazzo Reale, 22 febb.–1 giugno 1997* (Milan 1997)
Nilsson, *GGR*	M.P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* (Munich: vol. 1[3], 1967; vol. 2[2], 1961)
OGIS	W. Dittenberger, *Orientis graecae inscriptiones selectae*, 2 vols. (Leipzig 1903–05)
OLD	P.G.W. Glare (ed.), *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford 1968–82)
PAwB	Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge
PGrMag	K. Preisendanz (ed.), *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (ed.[2] by A. Henrichs). 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1973–74; ed.[1] Leipzig and Berlin. 3 vols.: 1928; 1931; [1941])
RE	*[Paulys]Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, neue Bearbeitung von G. Wissowa…84 vols. (Stuttgart, Weimar, then Munich 1894–1980)
RfAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (Stuttgart, 1950–)
RGG[4]	H.D. Betz et al. (eds.), *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*[4] (Tübingen 1998–2007)

RIC	H. Mattingly, E.A. Sydenham et al. (eds.), *The Roman Imperial Coinage* (London 1923–81, reprinting 2001–)
RICIS	L. Bricault, *Recueil des inscriptions concernant les cultes isiaques.* 3 vols. Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres 31 (Paris 2005)
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, edited by H.S. Versnel, R. van den Broek et al., numbered from the last of the EPRO series, 114 (1992) (Leyden 1992–)
RGVV	Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten, 1 (1903)–27 (1939); 28 (1969)—(formerly Gießen, now Berlin)
RRC	M.H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*. 2 vols. (Cambridge 1974)
SB	F. Preisigke, F. Bilabel, E. Kiessling et al. (eds.), *Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten* (Berlin 1915–)
SIRIS	L. Vidman, *Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae.* RGVV 28 (Berlin 1969)
Syll.	W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum.*[3] 4 vols. (Leipzig 1915–24; repr. Hildesheim 1982)
ThesCRA	J.C. Balty et al. (eds.), *Thesaurus cultus et rituum antiquorum*. 6 vols. (Los Angeles 2004–2006)
TMMM	F. Cumont, *Textes et monuments figurés relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra.* 2 vols: 1: *Introduction*; 2: *Textes et monuments* (Brussels 1896–99)
Totti	M. Totti, *Ausgewählte Texte der Isis- und Sarapis-Religion* (Hildesheim 1985)
TRF	O. Ribbeck, *Tragicorum Romanorum Fragmenta*[3] (Leipzig 1897).
TWNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Berlin and Stuttgart 1933–79)
V.	M.J. Vermaseren, *Corpus inscriptionum et monumentorum religionis Mithriacae*. 2 vols. (The Hague 1956–60)
Walde-Hofmann	A. Walde, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*[3] (ed. J.B. Hofmann). 3 vols. (Heidelberg 1938–56)

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30. Banquet of Mithras and Sol. Terra sigillata dish found in the Skt. Matthias Roman cemetery, Trier, in 1905 (diam. 0.175m). III^{p}. Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Trier, inv. no. 05.228. Courtesy of the Museum.

INTRODUCTION

> Pour faire l'histoire d'une religion, il est nécessaire, premièrement, d'y avoir cru (sans cela, on ne saurait comprendre par quoi elle a charmé et satisfait la conscience humaine); en second lieu, de n'y plus croire d'une manière absolue; car la loi absolue est incompatible avec l'histoire sincère.
>
> Ernest Renan
> *Vie de Jésus*, Introduction

This book aims to contribute to a fuller understanding of the social and ideological reality of the Roman Empire. Its topic is three—and only three—of the cults known since Franz Cumont's famous lectures of 1905–6 (Cumont 1929) as the oriental religions of the Roman Empire, but more correctly as graeco-oriental cults: those of Mater Magna (Cybele), Isis and Serapis, and Mithras. Its subject is the reception, transformation and socio-religious roles of these cults in the complex culture of the Roman Empire, and their relation to emergent Christianity. Its aim is to reassert the validity of the traditional practice of viewing these cults as a typological unity, and, against current trends, to re-emphasise their significance in the religious history of at any rate the Latin-speaking areas of the empire.

First, a word about terminology. I concede that both terms of the traditional expression 'oriental religions' are unsatisfactory. On the first, 'oriental', no one can today fail to be aware of the ideological loading of the concept, from the time of the Persian Wars to the colonial aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918.[1] No one can now read Cumont's utterances about 'les Levantins', or his descriptions of Dio Chrysostom or Lucian as 'orientaux', or his talk of 'l'invasion des cultes orientaux' and 'mystères barbares', without misgivings.[2] He

[1] T. Hentsch, *L'Orient imaginaire: La vision politique occidentale de l'Est méditerranéen* (Paris 1988) is indispensable; in the context of religion, Amir-Moezzi 2000.

[2] Resp. Cumont 1929, 4; 6; 16, 38. On Cumont's constructions, which betray considerable muddle and indecision vis-à-vis the contrasting views of his immediate predecessors in France, esp. Ernest Renan and Victor Duruy, see J.-M. Pailler, Les religions orientales selon Franz Cumont: une création continu, *MEFRIM* 111 (1999) 635–46; C. Bonnet, Les "religions orientales" au laboratoire de l'Hellénisme, 2: F. Cumont, in Bonnet and Bendlin 2006, 181–205; eadem and Van Haeperen 2006.

was of course simply adopting terms current in late nineteenth-century Europe, together with the unself-conscious colonial baggage that attended them; in his own eyes, however, the point was to pick out and valorise the 'inépuisables réserves' of the ancient oriental civilisations and so reverse the conception, traditional since the Enlightenment, of a Roman Empire undermined and betrayed, above all in matters religious, by the Orient. Moreover, everyone now knows—could have known since the 1930s—that Cumont's oriental religions were to a very high degree hellenised and romanised, since otherwise they would never have been received.[3] They were thought of, and called themselves, Egyptian, Phrygian and Persian, but the reality was far more complex. Nevertheless, in my view we need a word to denote a group of cults that were distinctive in the Graeco-Roman world, and which themselves emphasised their own alterity—even if we prefer to call it 'peudo-alterity'. The conceptual loss that we incur by pretending on the one hand that these cults were just the same as any other religious association, the Poseidoniastai or the Mercuriales, or, on the other, that there is nothing to choose between Jewish or Christian groups and the oriental cults, because they are all 'oriental', seems to me to outweigh the trivial danger of being mistaken as a proponent of the conceptual follies of yester-year.

Whatever the case with the ethnography of simple small-scale societies, in the context of the Roman Empire, the term 'religion' must be used with care. It most clearly applies to what in Marxist terms we can call the entire, if historically changing, symbolic system(s) of the ideological superstructure. Admittedly, both 'Greek religion' and 'Graeco-Roman religion' are elusive entities, which, for lack of controlling ideas and dearth of information, no human being now can, or ever could, describe exhaustively, or even (one sometimes thinks) adequately;[4]

It must be said, however, that Cumont tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to distance himself from current prejudices: his very opening sentences allude to modern imperialism and European contempt for 'Levantines'. These expressions continued to have a long life: in 1928 we can find A.D. Nock writing: "The East conquered the West because it had something to give" (1962, 16).

[3] Cf. the review of Cumont 1929 by E.J. Bickermann, *Orientalische Literaturzeitung* 1931, 210–13; also C. Schneider, Die griechischen Grundlagen der hellenistischen Religionsgeschichte, *ARW* 36 (1939) 300–24. On this theme, see now J.-M. Pailler, Les religions orientales: troisième époque, Pallas 35 (1989) 95–113; Belayche 2000a, 2000b.

[4] The best effort is the two volumes of Nilsson *GGR*, first conceived in the 1920s and unlikely ever to be superseded; followed by Wilamowitz 1931–2. It is even legitimate to doubt whether a formula or set of formulae could be found that would lend coherence

but no one seriously doubts that, in their Chinese-box manner, these symbolic systems provided a complex, differentiated, account of how the world functions and the rationale and goals of human existence. It is also pointless to object to the use of the word in relation to the individual city-states of the Archaic and Classical Greek worlds, or of Republican Rome, even though they lacked self-sufficiency as systems. But the worship of Mater Magna or Isis at Rome was only possible as a complement to other religious identities: these deities and the complexes of belief and praxis that accompanied them were excerpts or fragments from an alien religious world, a package in translation, offering a highly selective and instrumentalised glimpse of alterity.[5] No one could 'be' a Metroac or an Isiac in the same sense that one could be a Christian. At any rate, it seems evident to me that, with the exception of Judaism and the various Christianities, including 'gnosis', the religious institutions that entered the Graeco-Roman world from the eastern Mediterranean had no pretension, either organisationally or functionally, of offering a complete account of the world and the meaning of life, however they might have developed had Graeco-Roman paganism managed to endure as long as Hinduism. None of these movements can usefully be considered a self-sufficient or thorough-going religion in this sense. 'Cult' is therefore in many ways preferable.[6] As commonly used, cult denotes a specific form of worship subordinated to, and only making full sense within, a larger, composite structure, a religion. Applying such a view to antiquity, the word 'cult' would denote a lower level institution, in contrast to the larger totalities, Greek, Roman and Graeco-Roman, or 'Hellenistic', religion. So far as it goes, this is acceptable: the oriental

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to the entire period from Mycenae to late antiquity. On the impasse of modern study of Greek religion, and esp. the ambivalent role of Nietzsche's *Geburt der Tragödie* (1872), see briefly A. Henrichs, Götterdämmerung und Götterglanz: Griechischer Polytheismus seit 1872, in B. Seidensticker and M. Vöhler (eds.), *Urgeschichte der Moderne: Die Antike im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart and Weimar 2001) 1–19.

[5] For this reason, I retain the traditional adjective 'oriental', on the grounds that, whatever the historical origins of these cults (especially that of Mithras), in a post-Saidian world it captures the appropriate ideological connotations of claimed alterity. I have deliberately refrained from decorating the adjective with scare-quotes.

[6] Reinhard Merkelbach, however, demonstratively entitled his first chapter on the Roman (as opposed to the Iranian and Commagenian) cult of Mithras "Die Mithras-mysterien—eine neue Religion" (1984, 75). Still more recently Robert Turcan, who used to speak of 'le mithriacisme' or 'les mystères de Mithra' has recently chosen the expression 'la religion mithriaque' (2004: title).

cults are best understood as options within a larger polytheistic system capable of virtually unlimited self-renewal.

The main argument of the book is that the oriental cults, once adapted to a largely alien religious system in varying degrees receptive to them, became religious consumer-goods widely available for consumption within the host culture. In some ways they functioned like other group-cults in the Empire, providing an institutional structure for individual religiosity (cf. Rüpke 2007b). Above all, they were not exclusive: they did not reject ritual modes proper to civic cult. They accepted the very essence of traditional religion, the bond established between sacrifice, as the central mode of ritual action, euergetic beneficence (in this case the distribution of food—sacrificial meat—supplied by the members of the élite and sub-élite who provided the victims), and the mass of the population, as a collective expression of common commitment to a highly asymmetrical political order.

This however is only part of the picture. In the course of their Hellenisation, thanks to the far-reaching changes, or perhaps even genuine re-foundations, that they underwent, they developed their views of the cosmos in what we can only describe as an universalising direction, which clearly distinguishes them from the group-cults of traditional civic deities. This development, partly at least at the level of myth, was intimately linked to their assimilation of the Greek institution best suited to the formation of an inner-directed religiosity, the mystery-cult, and backed by specific, and characteristic, demands upon the body and upon ethical character. These three features enjoyed a dialectical relation to that altered perception of the divine, broadly at odds with the Greek and Roman civic tradition, which the 'School of Leyden' has epitomised as 'servitude of God', and Paul Veyne as 'fear of God', drawing inspiration from it but also strongly reinforcing it.[7] From a different perspective, J.Z. Smith has proposed the general term 'religions of "anywhere"' to denote a 'rich diversity of religious formations' in the Empire that occupied an interstitial space between domestic religion and civic religion.[8] All three of my cults, even that of Mater Magna, fall into this wider category, which also fits well with

[7] Cf. esp. Pleket 1981; Versnel 1981a; Veyne 1989 and 1999.

[8] J.Z. Smith, Here, There and Anywhere, in S. Noegel, J. Walker and B. Wheeler, *Prayer, Magic and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World* (University Park PA 2003) 21–36.

the problematic of the formation of an 'inner self' in ancient religion.[9] In relation to the perception of divine images, we might invoke what Jaś Elsner represents as a new interiorised mode of visual experience, whereby the naturalism that is the visual correlate of civic religiosity recedes in favour of the construction of ritualised moments of 'contact-viewing', true encounters with god, of the kind repeatedly experienced by Lucius in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* Bk. 11.[10] This view is itself no doubt a version of J.-P. Vernant's conception of a long-term shift from *mimesis* to φαντασία.[11]

In other words, the three oriental cults that concern me here were not simply absorbed into the larger system but showed themselves capable of quasi-autonomous development.[12] Indeed I would go so far as to claim that they played an important role in the transformation of religious sensibility, pin-pointed by the School of Leyden, that took place between the mid-Hellenistic period and the dominance of Christianity (say from the third century BC to the late fourth century AD), and more especially during the Principate. In Seneca's view, their adherents confused mere flamboyance with true religiosity, external trappings for true revelation (Logeay 2003, 33–6). We however are not compelled to follow him in this judgement, for he tacitly concedes that revelation was indeed their goal. I am very struck by the fact that it was the mysteries that most vigorously opposed the triumphant new cult and were therefore the target of the most bitter Christian diatribes (cf. Turcan 1984; 1997). In a mere five centuries, these exotic, marginal cults, which had found it

[9] See J. Assmann and G.G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions*. Numen Book Series 83 (Leyden 1999); G.G. Stroumsa, From Master of Wisdom to Spiritual Master in Late Antiquity, in Brakke, Satlow and Weitzman 2005, 183–96; AA.VV., *Pagani e cristiani alla ricerca della salvezza (secoli I–III)*. XXXIV incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana, Roma, 5–7 maggio 2005 (Rome 2006).

[10] J. Elsner, Cult and sculpture: sacrifice in the Ara Pacis Augustae, *JRS* 81 (1991) 49–61; idem 1995; cf. his collected and new essays, *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton 2007), esp. the epilogue: From Diana via Venus to Isis; some reservations in R. Brilliant, Forwards and Backwards in the Historiography of Roman Art, *JRA* 20 (2007) 7–24 at 17. My account can perhaps be seen as a partial complement to Elsner's at the level of specialist religious institutions. Note also D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago 1989).

[11] J.-P. Vernant, De la présentification de l'invisible à l'imitation de l'apparence, in idem, *Entre mythe et politique* (Paris 1996) 359–77 at 376f. (first published 1983).

[12] To that extent, I may be thought to be less indebted to Cumont, whose notion of mystery was always quite vague, if not muddled, than to Richard Reitzenstein's notion of 'Hellenistische Mysterienreligionen' (Reitzenstein 1927). Unfortunately, the more 'oriental' texts he found, the more his concept sank into over-detailed incoherence.

difficult to gain admittance to the Roman world, became the paladins of the defence of the traditional paganism of the state.

To put the matter in very general terms: the ancient normative religious structure, what E.R. Dodds once called (in relation to Greece) the 'inherited conglomerate', altered significantly under the pressures brought to bear on the ideological realm by the socio-political order. Of primary importance here was the fact that, as a result of the Roman Republican élite's incessant conquest and incorporation of new territories, and the subjection of their inhabitants to Roman exploitation, the society of the Empire was very different from that of Republican Rome. This development, which was of course preceded and indeed partly enabled by Alexander's conquests and the expansion of the Hellenistic Greek world in the form of tax-based complex states, provided the context for the gradual culture-contact that brought about those changes in provincial culture and society we call, for want of a better term, Romanisation but also, conversely, profoundly affected Roman culture too.[13] From this point of view, I would claim, the oriental cults were a destabilising factor within the traditional religious structures of the Graeco-Roman world, for all that these had been re-activated in a conservative sense, by political fiat, during the Augustan period.[14] Their success was due to a variety of factors, but I see a common denominator in their offer of institutional, and partly routinised, access to the subjectively appealing role of servant of God through the medium of secret revelation, the *magna religionis silentia* of Apuleius, *Met.* II.21.

I am of course aware that this programme, my use of the term oriental cults, and no doubt my attempt to save at least aspects of the category of the dying-rising god, introduced by Frazer and re-worked for the Graeco-Roman period by Cumont, must appear, especially in the Anglo-American world, in many ways reactionary.[15] It is there that

[13] The most important recent attempt to come to terms with these changes in the religious context is the project directed from Tübingen by H. Cancik, which includes 22 sub-projects and which came formally to an end in 2007: cf. Petzold, Rüpke and Steimle 2001. The most important conference proceedings to emerge from this project so far are Cancik and Rüpke 1997; Cancik and Hitzl 2003; Cancik, Schäfer and Spickermann 2006. But there is also much of value in the relevant chapters of Beard, North and Price 1998.

[14] Cf. A. Wallace-Hadrill, Rome's cultural revolution, *JRS* 79 (1989) 157–64.

[15] This category seemed to have been totally discredited by the famous article of J.Z. Smith 1984. I have taken heart from two books that appeared in 2001: the scrupulous survey of Mettinger 2001, who, without wanting to revive Frazer, provides a substantial defence of the seasonal interpretation of dying and rising gods in the

the influence of Ramsay MacMullen's *Paganism in the Roman Empire*, with its direct attack upon the Cumontian grand narrative and its stress on the centrality of civic religion in the Latin-speaking west, has been most deeply felt. It was followed shortly afterwards by the publication of Robin Lane Fox's similar demonstration, heavily influenced by the epigraphic work of Louis Robert, of the continuing vitality of civic cult in the eastern Mediterranean up to and well beyond the age of Constantine.[16] Neither book was at first much noticed on the European continent,[17] where the influence of the various branches of the History of Religions school, especially the School of Rome (notably Raffaele Pettazzoni, Ugo Bianchi), and of Maarten J. Vermaseren's enormous series, Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain, remained dominant and continued largely to underwrite the traditional grand narrative. In the very year that MacMullen's *Paganism* appeared, Vermaseren edited an important collective volume intended to up-date Cumont's notion of the oriental religions by including Judaism and Christianity as well as the traditional components: Cybele, Isis, Mithras, the Syrian cults, magic and astrology (Vermaseren 1981b).[18]

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ancient Near-East: Ugaritic Baal, Melqart-Heracles, Adon(is), Eshmun-Asclepius, but also Osiris and Dumuzi-Tammuz; and some of the essays in Xella 2001 (on Osiris, Adonis, Attis etc.). For acute appreciations, see C. Bonnet, rev. of Mettinger, *Biblica* 84 (2003) 587–91; eadem, La mort des hommes, la mort des dieux. Réflexions autour de quelques livres récents, *LEC* 71 (2003) 271–80; of Xella's collection: T.N.D. Mettinger, *History of Religions* 43 (2003–4) 341–3.

[16] MacMullen 1981; Lane Fox 1986; cf. too Trombley 1993–4.

[17] MacMullen 1981 was translated into French as *Paganisme dans l'Empire romain* in the series Chemins de l'histoire (PUF) in 1987; MacMullen 1984 into Italian in 1989; MacMullen 1997 into French in 2004. Lane Fox 1986 was translated into French as *Païens et chrétiens* (Toulouse 1997). So far as I know, these are the sole translations into Continental European languages. G. Alföldy argued much the same in 1989, e.g. "Statt von einem 'Sieg des Orients' könnte man beinahe von einem 'Sieg des Okzidents' in der mittleren Kaiserzeit sprechen" (1989, 78).

[18] Esp. the contributions by R. Van den Broek, Frühchristliche Religion, pp. 363–87; Kötting 1981; G. Quispel, Gnosis, pp. 413–35; A. Boehlig, Manichäismus, pp. 436–58; H. Künzl, Judentum, pp. 459–84; and M. Oppermann, Thrakische und Danubische Reitergötter, pp. 510–36 (Cumont was interested in these last, but the crucial, and rather poor, publication by D. Tudor appeared only in 1937: see his letter to Rostovtzeff of Nov. 9, 1937 = Bongard-Levine 2007, 223–5 no. 127 with fn. 860). Cumont had himself widened his category in the fourth ed. of 1929 by including the Dionysiac mysteries, on the specious grounds that they were 'demi-orientalisés'. For a sympathetic appreciation of Cumont's achievement, see R. Turcan, Franz Cumont, un fondateur, *Kernos* 11 (1998) 235–44; on his wide influence, note B. Rochette, Pour en revenir à Cumont…L'oeuvre scientifique de Franz Cumont cinquante ans après, in Bonnet and Motte 1999, 59–80; and the bibliometric study of G. von Hooydonk and G. Milis-Proost, The Scientific Survival of Franz Cumont, in Bonnet and Motte 1999, 81–91.

Moreover the public appetite for the grand narrative has persisted: one of the most successful books of recent years in this area, closely modelled on Cumont's original project, has been Robert Turcan's *Les cultes orientaux dans l'Empire romain*, which has seen three French editions and, under the rather odd title *The Cults of the Roman Empire*, been widely sold in English translation as a student text (Turcan 1992a; 1996a).[19] The old grand narrative is still alive and well in more traditional New Testament circles.

Nevertheless, the scholarly retreat from Cumont's idea of 'oriental religions' is clear. It has seemed safer, less contentious, to work on just one or other of the cults concerned rather than attempt a synthesis.[20] The direct effect of MacMullen's book was to minimise the historical importance of these cults vis-à-vis civic cult, and thus undermine the validity of the traditional assumption of a link between their success and that of Christianity. Explanations of the latter had to take a different form.[21] This partly explains the recent interest, especially in England, in the rise of monotheism.[22] Open dissatisfaction with the Cumontian grand narrative has now spread to the European continent, as the series of recent conferences in connection with the centenary of the first edition of *Les religions orientales* (1906) has made plain.[23] Perhaps the

[19] Cf. Liebeschuetz 1992, 250–62. Note also several books issued by reputable publishers and widely circulated: Giebel 1990, which runs through Eleusis, Dionysus, Samothrace, Cybele, Isis and Mithras (in that order); H. Kloft, *Mysterienkulte der Antike: Götter, Menschen, Rituale*[3] (Munich 1999); R. Girault, *Les religions orientales* (Paris 1995); A. Tripolitis, *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age* (Grand Rapids MI and Cambridge 2002); P. Scarpi (ed.) *Le religioni dei misteri* (Milan 2002).

[20] E.g. on Isis: Dunand 1973; Merkelbach 1995 (highly idosyncratic); Takács 1995; *RICIS*; on Mater Magna: Vermaseren 1977; *CCCA*; Roller 1999; Borgeaud 1996/2004; on Mithras: Merkelbach 1984 (again highly idosyncratic); Clauss 2000; Turcan 2000; Ulansey 1989 and Beck 2006 are exclusively concerned with astral interpretation.

[21] E.g. MacMullen 1984; 1997; idem, *Constantine* (New York 1969); Lane Fox 1986; R. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the obscure, marginal Jesus Movement became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western world in a few Centuries* (Princeton 1996); Hopkins 1999.

[22] E.g. Athanassiadi and Frede 1999. S. Mitchell runs a post-graduate project on this topic at the University of Exeter, UK.

[23] Bonnet and Bendlin 2006; Bonnet, Rüpke and Scarpi 2006; Bonnet, Ribichini and Steuernagel 2008; Bonnet, Pirenne-Delforge and Praet 2009. Some of the papers contributed were however not published in the various Proceedings. The process of revaluation was initiated by the publication of much of Cumont's academic correspondence (Bonnet 1997; 2006; also now Bongard-Levine et al. 2007) and the conference on syncretism at Rome in 1997, organised by C. Bonnet and A. Motte in honour of the fiftieth anniversary of Cumont's death (Bonnet and Motte 1999); note also the helpful sketch of Cumont's intellectual contacts, esp. with German scholars such as

most important achievement of these meetings has been to expose the ideological underpinning, from Friedrich Creuzer to Droysen, Mommsen and Cumont, of the very notion of an 'oriental cult'.[24] Although some older scholars, such as Marie-Françoise Baslez, retain the traditional category, it is noticeable that virtually no one addresses the issue of their specific appeal: intellectual energy has been directed rather to reconsidering the strengths and weaknesses of the notion of civic religion, the problems involved in the notions of *interpretatio Graeca* and *Romana*, and, most strikingly, the expansion of the term to include not merely the Dionysiac mysteries but also the Jewish diaspora and early Christianity. The category, already capacious enough, now threatens to lose such coherence as it could ever claim to. In studies of local centres, the oriental gods disappear among a plethora of other deities.[25] Moreover, it is now becoming usual to treat the temples and shrines of these cults as elements of a general Graeco-Roman paganism rather than as a distinctive architecture.[26] Some at least of the objections, explicit and implicit, to the grand narrative are sound, since the intellectual claims of these cults were indeed rather different from what late nineteenth-century scholars believed. There is also a legitimate debate to be conducted over the appropriateness of Cumont's wide—in his own day, quite traditional—demarcation of the 'oriental religions'. I do not however wish to embark on this task in the present book—the theme has after all been widely aired in the past few years.

T. Mommsen, Usener, Diels and Hirschfeld, in Bonnet 2006. An important predecessor however is A. Rousselle, La transmission décalée: nouveaux objets ou nouveaux concepts, *Annales ESC* 1989, 161–71.

[24] Esp. P. Borgeaud, L'Orient des religions. Réflexion sur la construction d'une polarité, de Creuzer à Bachofen, in Bonnet and Bendlin 2006, 153–62; P. Payen, Les "religions orientales" au laboratoire de l'Hellénisme, 1: G. Droysen, in Bonnet and Bendlin 2006, 163–80; also the very valuable essay by Bonnet and van Haeperin 2006. The role of l'Égypte imaginaire, though often neglected, is of great importance here, cf. E. Hornung, *Das esoterische Ägypten* (Munich 1999); W. Seipel (ed.), *Ägyptomanie: Europäische Ägyptenimagination von der Antike bis Heute*. Schriften des Kunsthistorischen Museums, Wien 3 (Vienna 2000).

[25] E.g. Spickermann 2003; idem, Mogontiacum als Zentralort der Germania Superior, in Cancik, Schäfer and Spickermann 2006, 167–93; C. Tsochos, Philippi als städtisches Zentrum Ostmakedoniens in der hohen Kaiserzeit: Aspekte der Sakraltopographie, ibid. 245–72.

[26] E.g. Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2000; eadem, Roman Cult-Sites: A Pragmatic Approach, in Rüpke 2007d, 205–21; eadem and Schäfer 2002; Steuernagel 2001; 2004; 2006; M. Trümper, Negotiating Religious and Ethnic Identity: The Case of Clubhouses in late Hellenistic Delos, in Nielsen 2006, 113–40.

When I use the term oriental cults in this book I mean not Cumont's broad notion, itself taken over from the nineteenth-century historiography on the topic, but simply the three major movements that seem to me to possess a typological coherence.[27] The wider category he used thus has no special significance for me and I make no attempt here to defend it. The issues are complicated by the nature of the evidence and of the subject itself: there is no easy way of resolving them that does not do violence to that complexity. My focus, as I make clear in Chapter 1, is upon those cults that, originating in the eastern Mediterranean, underwent a thorough-going transformation in the process of adapting themselves to Hellenistic-Roman culture, in particular by assimilating features characteristic of the grand mysteries celebrated from time immemorial at Eleusis. The most important of these were initiation, as a ritual of dis-aggregation from the crowd, and the vow of silence regarding what had been communicated in that experience.[28] The originally Phrygian cult of Cybele and Attis, and the Egyptian cult of Isis, Osiris and Serapis in particular conform to this model. 'Persian' Mithras however did not.[29] One of the questions I ask is why it was that the initiatory experience, particularly in its Eleusinian form, gained such a hold at this period. There certainly were other Graeco-Roman mysteries, such as the Samothracian mysteries, those of Dionysus, of the Cabiri at Thebes, of the Roman emperor, of numerous local divinities such as Zeus of Panamara, but neither their content nor what we know of their ritual praxis seem to have had any influence on my group of three. This justifies my decision not to include the Dionysiac mysteries, which were not perceived as alien and did not need to assimilate themselves to a foreign culture.[30] They form part of the socio-religious

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[27] I here rely upon the framework established by Chirassi Colombo 1982. She employs the periphrasis "i tre più noti sistemi misterici dei primi secoli dell'impero", for which my short-hand is "the oriental cults".

[28] There have been a number of good recent accounts of aspects of Graeco-Roman initiation: Meslin 1986; Turcan 1996c; Riedweg 1998; and the collection edited by Moreau 1992a,b. These have largely superseded older accounts from the History of Religions School, such as Bleecker 1965.

[29] Cf. the interesting recent description by Turcan: "(La religion mithriaque) où confluent de fait un lointain héritage iranien, une cosmologie fortement imprégnée d'idées grecques (stoïciennes en particulier) et la culture romaine ambiante" (2004, 259).

[30] On Greek mysteries, see recently, apart from Burkert 1987, the essays in Cosmopoulos 2003; fundamental on Samothrace: Cole 1983. Several scholars, such as M. Jost, Mystery Cults in Arcadia, in Cosmopoulos 2003, 143–68, and A. Schachter, Evolutions of a Mystery Cult: The Theban Kabiroi, in Cosmopoulos 2003, 112–42, have stressed the fact that in the Greek world such mysteries were generally closely connected to

context within which the oriental cults flourished rather than part of my subject here.

As I try to make clear in Chapter 4.2, I do not think the relative success of the oriental cults in the Empire was a sign of dissatisfaction with the religious options on offer, whether at the level of public-civic cult, institutionalised group worship, or household observance. It seems clear that 'traditional' paganism was sufficiently diverse and complex to offer something to almost everyone. The attraction of the oriental cults, and their mystery component in particular, cannot be as easily explained as Réville, Duruy, Cumont and the others imagined. Among these factors we can surely list the growth of a 'consumer' demand for more differentiated religious experience between the household and public cult; the gradual establishment of the idea that religious experience was of a special order, not reducible to other social experiences and roles; and the demand in a dynamic and complex society for new opportunities for symbolic self-expression and the exchange of new types of specialised knowledge. Then again, there are signs of larger shifts in this period relating to the value and place of the body, and the negotiation of the idea of selfhood, in the religious context, which are most easily grasped through the metaphor of slavery to a god. If I sometimes summarise these themes by speaking of anxieties in the face of the socio-cultural changes brought about the Empire, I do so not to hark back to the psychologism of a Dodds, but to express my conviction that the oriental cults were simultaneously a sign of their times and active participants in the creation of what we might call religious 'density' in the Empire.

There is in fact another reason for my choice, which I may perhaps state here. This is that many of the ancient sources refer to the cults of these deities by the general term 'mysteries'. Non-Christian authors of the mid-Principate as well as the Christian apologists agree on this point. The insistence on differences and distinctions between them

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civic cult (e.g. the third-century BC rebuilding of the Kabeirion was financed by the city of Thebes), or at any rate carried out in the context of the civic calendar, as was clearly the case at Panamara: P. Roussel, Les mystères de Panamara, *BCH* 27 (1927) 57–137 (here the word 'mystery' simply meant a public feast under the aegis of Zeus). For a recent account of Dionysiac initiation in the later period, see Turcan 1992b and 2003; H. Schwarzer, Die Bukoloi in Pergamon. Ein dionysischer Kultverein im Spiegel der archäologischen und epigraphischen Zeugnissen, in Nielsen 2006, 153–68. On the theories of G. Sauron and P. Veyne relating to the Villa of the Mysteries, cf. J.-M. Pailler, Mystères dissipés ou mystères dévoilés, *Topoi* 10.1 (2000) 373–90.

makes it difficult to acknowledge the extent to which the goods on offer in the ideological and religious market-place of the Empire resembled one another.[31] These goods aimed at satisfying what I still think of as new spiritual needs that they themselves encouraged and fostered, and by which they were sustained in return. Christianity shared with the mysteries, if nothing else, a specific geographical and cultural context. To my mind, the reluctance of many scholars to study the whole picture does not foster our understanding of the grander historical processes at work.[32] We must be allowed to try to discover whether studying a group of cults that bear an obvious family resemblance to one another, and have not been chosen arbitrarily, helps in the task of understanding the shifts in religious thought of a period in which the political order was desperately on the look out for effective ideological allies.

From this it will be clear that the category 'mystery-religion' plays a central role in my conception of the oriental cults.[33] What is most truly characteristic of the latter is not so much their public face, though I pay considerable attention to this, as their self-representation as mysteries. This term is used by ancient writers to refer to a complex of knowledge, understanding and action that was restricted to initiates, and might not be divulged to non-initiates. The rule of silence applied to what the teacher, the mystagogue, revealed to the *mystes*, the neophyte. Initiation was thus an effective means of social control: our ignorance of the teachings of these cults is due to the fidelity of their adherents to the rule.[34] Whatever the details, however, the core idea was that submission to the power of the god was met by the individual offer of well-being in this world and, from the first century AD, salvation in the world beyond. The idea of a central revelation or secret, and of a

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[31] For the idea of a religious market-place, which I find attractive, see North, 1992; idem, 2003.

[32] See my paper given at the conference in Rome (Nov. 2006): "Le pouvoir des concepts et la valeur de la taxonomie: religions orientales, cultes à mystères", to appear in Bonnet, Pirenne-Delforge and Praet 2009.

[33] I here tend to follow U. Bianchi, The Religio-Historical Question of the Mysteries of Mithra, in Bianchi 1979, 3–68; also Bianchi and Vermaseren 1982. Although she is the most eminent pupil of U. Bianchi, Sfameni Gasparro has argued that the evidence for mysteries in the cult of Cybele and Attis is doubtful and anyway requires strict scrutiny as regards the claims and offers made (Sfameni Gasparro 1985). I would resist this conclusion.

[34] Eusebius of Caesarea, at the beginning of the fourth century AD, alludes to this rule in the Orphic text from Aristobulus that I cite in the epigraph on p. v. As a Christian, he was not bound by the prescription, but the fear of such sacrilege had penetrated deeply into the collective mentality.

process of initiation to prepare for its apprehension, are the fundamental concepts that define the mysteries. I see this notion of a central secret however mainly as a form of inducement to, and reinforcement of, a specific set of ethical commitments that set these cults apart from the practice of what, for want of a better term, we may call routinised, common-or-garden paganism.

The oriental cults, particularly the mysteries they offered, have from antiquity widely been regarded as a sort of preparation for the success of Christianity. As regards its origins and typology, Christianity was an oriental religion, and for their part the apologists were astonished—horrified—to discover the degree to which the 'true religion' resembled the mysteries, a fact that they could only explain by invoking the idea that the Devil had invented the similarities in order to discredit the 'Christian mystery'. Historically speaking, however, we have to do with a situation of competition between different options, closely related in that they stemmed from analogous cultural systems in the eastern Mediterranean and were subject to the same pressures. Christianity and the mysteries resemble one another because they offered analogous solutions to the needs generated in certain sectors of the society of the Roman Empire. "The Epistle of Aristeas, the Acts of the Apostles, and the *Golden Ass* by Apuleius, here especially the eleventh book, are only a few of many documents to demonstrate missionary interest in the well-being of all, where the propagated religion is proposed as the major instrument for bringing this about and for serving the best interests of the individual as well."[35] These new dissatisfactions and desires were the result of the Romans' assimilation of territories into their own cultural system, and the gradual homogenisation of cultures, despite the continuing differences that served to distinguish the innumerable subject communities of the Empire.[36]

In view of all this, the best way of thinking about religious change in the Roman Empire is not to understand Christianity as having succeeded thanks to the *praeparatio evangelica*, the preparatory work effected by the mysteries, but as one option among many others with similar

[35] D. Georgi, Socio-economic Reasons for the 'Divine Man' as a Propagandistic Pattern, in Schüssler Fiorenza 1976, 27–42 at 36. As is well known, M. Goodman, Jewish Proselyting in the First Century, in Lieu, North and Rajak 1992, 53–78, and elsewhere, has argued strongly against the claim that the Jews actively proselytised.

[36] The complexity and ambiguity of the process of 'Romanisation' (a term he rejects) has been recently underscored by Hingley 2005.

features that came into being at a particular historical moment.[37] The issue of how Christianity established itself in this context, which of course included the existence of the oriental cults, is a different one, and requires its own separate analysis. I agree with the scholarly consensus on this. In any case, the main role of the mystery-component of the oriental cults lay in the general belief that they had contributed to the triumph of Christ rather than in any intrinsic significance they may have had in this regard.

The purpose of this brief introduction has been simply to set out the larger conceptual framework of the book, whose organisation corresponds pretty exactly to the ideas set out here. The short first chapter sets out the three 'orders of things', cosmic, socio-productive, and eschatological, that taken together establish the sub-system of belief within the wider framework of a religious institution. Chapter 2 presents the three cults' systems of beliefs at some length in terms of these three orders. Here I attempt, in defiance of our general ignorance, to piece together the shards of their teaching and set them into a coherent system of explanation. Chapter 3 discusses their systems of values, which I see as playing a major role in their appeal. The longest section of the book, Chapter 4, is devoted to an examination of the public, exoteric, rituals in which the adherents of the two major cults, Mater Magna and Isis, displayed both their self-proclaimed exoticism and their assimilation of the values of the civic community. Beyond that, I do what I can with the evidence concerning initiation. Despite the successful insistence on secrecy, I believe we do have enough scraps of information to give us a rough idea of what such rites consisted in, though of course without the details. It is hoped that the reader will be able to form his or her own impression of the case, and come to his or her own conclusion about the religious character of the three cults and the legitimacy of my decision to take them together.[38] The final

[37] Subjectively of course the difference was, or might be made to appear, total. The rapidity with which early Christianity defined itself against paganism in terms of the issue of sacrificial meat is made clear by Woyke 2007.

[38] I accept of course that this is procedure is not self-evident; but think there still is a case to be made in favour of the procedure advocated long ago by H. Willoughby: "The most nearly exact procedure would seem to be to emphasize those fundamental aspects of the mystery type of religion which were characteristic of all the cults in common and to balance this with a detailed investigation of the idiosyncrasies of each particular cult": *Pagan Regeneration* (Chicago 1929) 33, cited by Wiens 1980, 1249.

chapter is an inevitable outcome of what the book sets out to achieve, in that it provides the tools needed to make a considered judgement of the relation between the oriental cults and Christianity.

I often refer in this book to social conflicts, the difficulties the Roman Empire faced in trying to integrate the system it had created, the contradictions both personal and collective generated within it, and the role played by various institutions, particularly religious ones, in alleviating these problems. The epigraph to this Introduction is taken from Ernest Renan (1823–92), whose *Vie de Jésus* first appeared in 1863 and within a year had been reprinted thirteen times. Despite the overstatement, Renan's claim must cause us to reflect on the subjectivity of any historical engagement with the past. No one can unthink the cultural paradigms within which he or she has been socialised. It was with this in mind that I have chosen a 'parabolic' approach: the citation from Renan serves to illustrate my conviction that historical analysis is primarily an individual or personal matter. I would even go so far as to claim that the historian's objectivity is a mere fiction serving to mask the author's constant and undeniable presence, both willed and unwilled, conscious and unconscious, in his or her text.[39] I hope that in the course of this attempt to get at the truth, I will be able to persuade the reader of the legitimacy of my particular way of looking at things.

Habent sua fata libelli. Indeed; but my ideal reader would have taken time beforehand to re-read the chapters of Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* Bk. 11.19–30 that constitute what is by far the most valuable surviving attempt to re-create the nervous apprehension, the febrile intensity, the self-abasement and sheer gratitude that ideally accompanied the experience of encountering the *magna religionis silentia* evoked in the second epigraph on p. v, the grand, ineffable revelations of the mysteries. Whatever can be said in favour of an ironic reading of Bk. 11, and there is no doubt plenty, it seems to me that, if we are to do justice to the oriental cults, we would do well to make the effort of learning to value Mithras' words as a fictional, and of course idealised, insight into a particular, paradigmatic, frame of mind. This book is a circuitous,

[39] Cf. the remarks of Hingley 2005, 1–13, and the interesting work on the twentieth-century constructions of ancient slavery by N. McKeown, *The Invention of Ancient Slavery?* (London 2007).

academic attempt to persuade the reader to do just that. Criticism of the old grand narrative, partly justified though it be, is in danger, I think, of ignoring or misrepresenting the fascination exercised by the mysteries' offer of a privileged relation to divinity culminating in a privileged fate after death.

CHAPTER ONE

RELIGION, CULT AND MYSTERY

> ὡς τὰ…ἀπόρρητα τῆς κατὰ τὰ μυστήρια τελετῆς ἐνδο[ξ]ότερόν τε καὶ σεμνότερον…τοῖν θεοῖν ἀποδοθοίη…
> Letter of Commodus to the Eumolpidae at Eleusis, AD 180–92: *Syll.* 873 ll. 5–13

> Le sacré revient au galop…Heureux, parce qu'il est temps de sortir de la mise à plat systématique. Dangereux, parce que rien n'est plus nocif que le faux sacré.[1]

> Haben jene Nationen der Vorwelt einander nur Elephantenzähne zugeführt, und Gold und Sklaven? Nicht auch Erkenntnisse, religiöse Gebräuche und Götter?
> F. Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (1810–12[1]) Introd.

In the Introduction I have already set out my reasons for choosing the group of cults that are the subject of this book. We now must try to enter their conceptual world, comprehend their rituals. The very fact that they managed to expand all over the Roman world confirms,

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[1] J. de Bourbon-Busset, Localiser le sacré, in *Champs du sacré* (Paris 1982) 3. I have hesitated over the appropriateness of this epigraph, but its oddity finally induced me to include it. My objection is not so much that everyone writes whatever comes into his head, as that supposedly specialist publications appeal to *esprits forts* to discuss the idea of the sacred on the basis of supposedly objective knowledge (e.g. J. Ries, Retour ou permanence du sacré? in idem 1986a, 1–13). To be specific: what does it mean systematically to flatten everything, in connection with the sacred? Is it certain that there is 'nothing more dangerous' than the pseudo-sacred? And who exactly has the right to decide what the 'pseudo-sacred' might be? My reservations are by no means rhetorical; as good a historian of religion as C.J. Bleeker once wrote an article entitled, How to distinguish between True Religion and False Religion (in idem, 1975, 67–75), whose last paragraph reads: "One knows the tree by its fruits. The good deeds prove the truth of religion…we are not totally deprived of criteria to distinguish true religion from false religion. But such criteria should be handled with wisdom and discretion". If he had known Karlheinz Deschner's vast *Kriminalgeschichte des Christentums* (8 vols. up to 2004) (Reinbek/Hamburg 1986–), or M.J. Engh, *In the Name of Heaven: 3,000 Years of Religious Persecution* (Amherst 2007) 89–140, 161–213, 226–250, he would probably not have expressed himself so blithely.

whatever the actual number of their adherents at any one time, that the populations of quite diverse areas of the Empire felt attracted to such religious experiences and found in them a means, alongside more traditional religious forms, of responding to some of the new anxieties lurking in the realm of the *imaginaire*.

The task of studying a heterogeneous group of cults like this is studded with difficulties. In order to provide a self-consistent and coherent account, I have adopted a method I call 'rapprochement', which underlies the book's structure. This procedure requires a little explanation.

In my view, religion is a cultural system itself articulated in a variety of sub-systems that reflect, at the level of the *imaginaire*, the real conditions of existence in a specific historical formation.[2] Every society,

[2] See C. Geertz, Religion as a Cultural System, in: M. Banton (ed.), *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London 1966) 1–46, as an example of such a substantive definition. M. Spiro, Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation, in: ibid. 85–126, offers a functional one. Geertz is, with some justification, the most influential older anthropologist of religion, though has more recently been subjected to criticism. Some sympathy for Durkheimian sociology too is surely indispensable: its rejection of psychological accounts, for example, the conception of religion as the administration of the sacred, or the analysis of religious phenomena as founded on a mixture of myth and ritual (and its analogies): De la définition des phénomènes religieux, *L'Année Sociologique* 2 (1899) 1–28, with S. Lukes, *Émile Durkheim* (Harmondsworth 1973) 237–44, 450–84. Phenomenological views, as represented by G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology*, tr. J.E. Turner (London 1938, 1964[2]) or C.J. Bleeker, *The Sacred Bridge. Researches into the Nature and Structure of Religion* (Leyden 1963), are less productive. A preliminary account of the problems involved in defining religion is offered e.g. by M.B. McGuire, *Religion. The Social Context* (Belmont, CA 2002[5]) 5–12; more rewardingly, Y. Lambert, La 'Tour de Babel' des définitions de religion, *Social Compass* 38.1 (1991) 73–85, or—in more detail—J.V. Spickard, A Revised Functionalism in the Sociology of Religion: Mary Douglas' Recent Work, *Religion* 21 (1991) 141–64. Also worth mentioning are: R.B. Finnestad, Religion as a Cultural Phenomenon, in: G. Englund (ed.), *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians. Cognitive Structures and Popular Expressions* (Uppsala 1987) 73–96; and the global reflections of G. Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion* (London and New York, 1999). Of great value for assessing the present state of play are two volumes published as Supplements to *Numen*: T.A. Idinopoulos and B.C. Wilson (eds.), *What is Religion? Origins, Definition, and Explanations*. Studies in the History of Religions (*Numen* Book Series, 81) (Leyden 1998), and J.G. Platvoet and A.L. Molendijk (eds.), *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion. Contexts, Concepts and Contests*. Studies in the History of Religions (*Numen* Book Series, 84) (Leyden 1999). Among readings in rough conformity with mine, see B.S. Turner, *Religion and Social Theory. A Materialist Perspective* (Guildford 1983, 1991[2]), and Gordon 1979a. He there defines the interdependence of religion and other cultural systems: "For the cognitivist, religion is one of the central and most important codes in a society. That is not, of course, to say that it is in any way autonomous, since it is linked in all sorts of ways to others, alimentary, reproductive, linguistic codes, for example. But it is central (especially in a traditional society) insasmuch as it articulates for its adherents the scope and nature of power, both 'vertically' between us and the

therefore, produces a cultural construction whose ambition it is to describe and taxonomise perceived reality, not merely at the level of empirical facts but also at the level of the *imaginaire*. During the process of acculturation from childhood, this heritage is transmitted to all the members of the community who absorb it, and are thus enabled to sidestep the burdensome intellectual challenge of developing a personal or private explanation of the order of the real and its counterpart in the *imaginaire*. Myths constitute the vehicle of transmission of this collective account, which undergoes adjustment corresponding to changes in the objective conditions of the historico-social formation in which they are elaborated. It thus becomes a cultural mediator of great importance, offering a shifting form of explanation that allows the members of the community to face, without excessive anxiety, a reality that might otherwise appear chaotic and uncontrollable.[3]

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divine world, and 'horizontally' between men" (p. 17); "We can perhaps understand religion, in this context, as a specialized sub-system of language focused upon the category 'power'" (p. 19).

[3] Here I can name some of my debts; whether or not I agree with what they say, all have contributed in one way or another to forming my position. I would note especially the series of suggestive introductions by G. Filoramo to the excellent re-publication of R. Pettazzoni's old 6-vol. collection *Miti e leggende* (1948–63) with the same title (Turin, undated but ca. 1990–91); E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912, tr. E.W. Swain, London 1915), Book II, chap. 3; G.S. Kirk, *Myth, its Meanings and Functions in Ancient and other Cultures* (Cambridge 1970); and A.E. Jensen, *Myth and Cult among Primitive Peoples* (Chicago 1973). The relations of mutual dependence between myth and ritual have been examined critically by J. Fontenrose, *The Ritual Theory of Myth* (Berkeley 1966), hostile especially to the mechanical application of apriorisms; G. Durand, *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire* (Paris 1973); Sabbatucci 1978, esp. the eponymous chap. 9; G. Ferraro, *Il linguaggio del mito. Valori simbolici e realtà sociale nelle mitologie primitive* (Milan, 1979); M. Detienne, *The Creation of Mythology* (Chicago, 1986, original ed., 1981); M. Godelier, *La production des grands hommes* (Paris 1982). I have learned nothing of value from the theories of René Girard, who, as is well known, understands myth as a system of persecutory representation, which functions to exorcise an aboriginal ill, comparable to the manner in which the scape-goat functions as a propitiatory victim: Qu'est-ce qu'un mythe? in: idem, *Le Bouc émissaire* (Paris 1983; English tr. as *The Scapegoat* [Baltimore 1986]) 37–67 (cf. the critique of his earlier theories by Gordon 1979b, 279–310). Other points of view: H. Limet and J. Ries (eds.), *Le mythe, son langage et son message. Actes du Colloque de Liège et Louvain-la-Neuve, 1981*, Homo religiosus 9 (Louvain 1983) is interesting as a methodological application; instructive too is the collection of articles in A. Dundes (ed.), *Sacred Narrative. Readings in the Theory of Myth* (Berkeley 1984); see too B. Lincoln, *Myth, Cosmos and Society: Indo-European Themes of Creation and Destruction* (Cambridge, Mass. and London 1986), 41ff., where he analyses the relations between myth and the social order. Of the Paris school with its Lévi-Straussian and Dumézilian inflection, note J.-P. Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (Hassocks 1980, original ed., Paris 1974); also the fine book by R.G.A. Buxton, *Imaginary Greece: The Contexts of Mythology* (Cambridge 1994). P. Lévêque, *Bêtes, dieux et hommes. L'imaginaire des premières religions* (Paris 1985), 117ff. is unforgettable. Further: AAVV. *Le mythe et le mythique.*

In mediating complex symbolic structures, myth thus provides order, imposes meaning on reality; it offers the members of the group a simple means of self-identification, the collective acceptance of a system of beliefs. However, at the same time, the socio-cultural life of the community needs more or less explicit regulation. It is at this level that myth plays a part, since it tacitly mediates the ethical norms that condition and justify divine behaviour. Then again, membership of the cultural group in which such a system has developed demands a type of group behaviour capable of reproducing the mythical account in a sacralised, symbolic form, and in a regular manner, such that, by iterating the temporal rhythms and the order of things that the collective imagination has wrested from chaos, it can transmute them into the foundations of its own account of reality.

Myth can of course be understood at several different levels. From my perspective, however, it is best understood as a more or less coherent explanatory account of 1) the heavenly bodies and the forces of nature, that is, the cosmic order;[4] 2) the relation between human beings and their social environment, that is, the social and productive order; and lastly 3) a story about the after-life, whether in the underworld or in heaven—that is, the eschatological order. These three 'orders of things', cosmic, social and eschatological, make up the sub-system of beliefs which, together with that of values, i.e. ethical norms (whether codified in law or not), constitutes the religious system.

Colloque de Cerisy-la-Salle (Paris 1987), esp. the outstanding contribution by J. Durand, reflecting on historical versus mythical change. For a survey of the various currents of thought in the field, beginning with the Presocratics, note J. de Vries, *Forschungsgeschichte der Mythologie* (Munich 1961); on classic twentieth-century theories: I. Strenski, *Four Theories of Myth in the Twentieth Century: Cassirer, Eliade, Lévi-Strauss and Malinowski* (Iowa City 1987, 1989²); J. Mohn, *Mythostheorien* (Munich 1998); and the fine survey by Csapo 2005. I have also read with pleasure the critique by A. Testart, *Des mythes aux croyances. Esquisse d'un théorie générale* (Paris 1991); his 'Structure S' is refreshing.

[4] On which see e.g. R. Gothóni and J. Pentikäinen (eds.), *Mythology and Cosmic Order*, Studia Fennica 32 (Helsinki 1987). I would also recommend the suggestive work of J.-P. Cèbe, Chaos et cosmos dans les civilisations traditionelles et antiques: le mythe et ses prolongements, *Cahiers des Études Anciennes* 28 (1993) 111–122, who offers a general account of the opposition between the two terms and their symbolic projection. This topic continues to be of concern to scholars interested in the universe viewed in religious terms; on the Renaissance Latin hymns of the Greek exile Michael Marullus (1453–1500), for example, see C. Harrauer, *Kosmos und Mythos. Die Weltgotthymnen und die mythologischen Hymnen des Michael Marullus. Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Wiener Studien, Beiheft 21 (Vienna 1994). On a different aspect, though one less directly relevant to my topic here, arising from current anthropological views, see W.C. Roof (ed.), *World Order and Religion* (Albany 1991).

This brief presentation of my pre-conceptions should enable the reader to understand my view of the controversial subject of the religious character of the oriental cults. It was once wrongly believed that they were foreign 'national' religions, that is, state cults in their countries of origin. It is now a commonplace to claim that in fact all three of the cults I deal were profoundly transformed by contact with Graeco-Roman culture.[5] As cults integrated into the religious culture of the Latin West, they formed part of the ideological superstructure. That is, they are best seen not as *alternative* religious systems but as specialised formations within a larger cultural whole, where each individual could find his own place in accordance with his birth and disposition.[6] The context of that individual search however was always membership, whether voluntary or enforced, in the public or civic cult, a membership expressed both in personal piety and through participation in euergetistic public sacrifice.[7] In such circumstances, it is reasonable to say that, at any rate by the second century AD, the adherents of these cults were in no sense trying to break free of their given world but invoking deities that were seen as powerful partners auxiliary to the system.[8]

That said, it seems to me that the novelty of the narrative-complexes that sustained these cults needs greater emphasis than is usually given them. That has been one of my main aims in writing this book. These complexes grounded a coherent set of beliefs, values and ritual practices that were very largely independent of the grand mythological structure that sustained Graeco-Roman civic cult in the wide sense (witness the central role of myth for the Second Sophistic). To that extent, I think, they can be seen as breaking the mould of ordinary religious practice in established groups, whether *thiasoi* or *collegia*.[9] On the basis of these myth-complexes, the oriental cults constructed their own distinctive religious cultures. In the case of the Mater Magna and Isis, they did

[5] A good general idea of the changes undergone by local cults, including those which did not succeed in spreading, is given by J.Z. Smith, Native Cults in the Hellenistic Period, *History of Religions* 11 (1971) 236–47.

[6] Dowden 2000 is an interesting introduction to the way pagan religions worked.

[7] See Gordon 1990b, 1990c; also the stimulating contribution by C. Ando, Exporting Roman Religion, in Rüpke 2007d, 429–445. For an indispensable account of personal piety and its evolution in the Greek world to the Roman imperial period, see the rich study by Versnel 1981a.

[8] The problem is in fact a false one, as J.A. North, Continuity and Change in Roman Religion, *PBSR* 44 (1976) 1–12; Liebeschuetz 1979; 1992; and K. Hopkins, *Death and Renewal* (Cambridge, 1983) 82f., have clearly shown. See now Leppin 2007, 97–100.

[9] See recently the essays in Rüpke 2007c.

so, to a significant degree, through the recognised means of festival and procession. But they also created their religious identity through appeal to the Greek category of mystery-cult. Indeed, so far as we know, the cult of Mithras existed only in this form. In taking over this mode of religious praxis, they extended the existing category of 'mystery' beyond its normative forms at Eleusis and Samothrace, the Bacchic mysteries and the Cabirion. For that reason, I see the truly characteristic feature of the oriental cults as residing in their provision of specific experiences of initiation, whose precise contents evidently in some cases, if we can trust Lucius' account in Apuleius, *Met.* 11, were considered to be the private property of individual groups.[10] In the course of this book, therefore, although I usually refer to them as the oriental cults, I sometimes, where the argument requires special emphasis on initiation, its pre-suppositions and its consequences, use the term 'mysteries' or a periphrasis such as 'mystery component'.[11]

Hardly any one would go so far as to compare the oriental cults with sects in the properly sociological sense.[12] One can however in my view go too far in the opposite direction: Walter Burkert for example famously compares ancient initiation into the mysteries to the experience of pilgrimage to Santiago di Compostela.[13] I would go along with the traditional modern view, which sees mystery-cults as typologically different from public cult, and therefore in a certain tension with it, despite the fact that the celebrations at Eleusis and in many other places were an aspect of public or official religion. I should also mention that Giulia Sfameni Gasparro has gone so far as to suggest that

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[10] The Isiac authorities at Rome did not recognise the initiation Lucius had undergone at Cenchreae and demanded that he undergo another, cf. Burkert 1987, 45.

[11] G. Sfameni Gasparro observes that in the first edition of the book I seemed systematically to confuse the term 'oriental cults' with 'mysteries' (Sfameni Gasparro 2006). I evidently failed then to make my use of these terms clear, and am now aware that I often used 'mystery' too loosely. I have tried in this edition to make the matter clearer.

[12] Cf. e.g. R. Towler, *Homo Religiosus: Sociological Problems in the Study of Religion* (London 1974) 110–15. But note e.g. Freyburger-Galland 1986.

[13] Burkert 1987, 10. No doubt he was thinking here of an experience of pilgrimage analogous to that developed by V. and E. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture. Anthropological Perspectives* (New York 1978). (In that connection, note the interesting remarks of R. Gothóni, Pilgrimage = Transformational Journey, in Ahlbäck 1993, 101–15. Understanding pilgrimage as a 'journey of transformation', Gothóni deliberately blurs the specificity of initiation, so that the journey (the preparation) converges with the rite of passage itself). Turcan 1992a seems to take a similar view to Burkert's, albeit less explicitly. Much the same is true of most essays in Freyburger-Galland 1986, despite the title.

only the cult of Mithras can be counted a true 'mystery religion'.[14] This seems to me, however, an unnecessary refinement, and I maintain the usual practice of taking all three as different instances, united by their ultimate origin outside the Graeco-Roman world, of the wider class of mystery-cults.

I turn now to an analysis of the myths for their information about the different sub-systems I have mentioned.

[14] Sfameni Gasparro 1979c and 1985, xvi. She argues substantially the same view at greater length, but with different arguments, in her rather ambivalent piece: I misteri di Mithra: Religione o culto?, in Hinnells 1994, 93–102.

CHAPTER TWO

SYSTEMS OF BELIEF

σπέρμα κακίας…τὰ μυστήρια.
Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 2.13.5
Stählin, p. 22.20f. Marcovich

In his *Exhortation to the Greeks*, Clement of Alexandria claims that the myths of the deities worshipped in the mysteries are the seed of evil and corruption. The modern historian however sees them rather as synthesising a particular version of reality that formed the basis of the beliefs of the adherents of these religious systems. Thanks to their ability to integrate contradictions and cultural inconsistencies, as well as the processes of transformation each cult had undergone on its way from its point of origin to its entry into the ideological superstructure of Rome, these narratives formed more or less highly-developed organic wholes.[1] However the lacunate nature of the sources available to us means that our access to each complex is fragmentary and partial. Not merely have we lost the evidence relating to the intermediate stages of their evolution, we have in some cases, notably Mithras, lost even the mythical narrative itself. Fortunately myth was not the only means of instructing initiands, since the lived experience of the religious group provided many other means of transmitting the relevant religious culture, to which we have some access. Fundamentally, however, the main information at our disposal for reconstructing the universe of beliefs is the mythical narrative, where it survives, and, to a lesser extent, the iconography together with references in literature, and of course epigraphy.

The reconstruction we might call 'canonical', with an account of the content of each cult, is of course that of Franz Cumont, dating from 1905–6.[2] As I have pointed out already in the Introduction, subsequent

[1] I naturally accept the point made by Bourdieu 2001, 338: "Il ne faut pas, on le voit, demander au mythe, même 'rationalisé', plus de loqique qu'il n'en peut offrir".

[2] The first edition of Cumont 1929 appeared in 1906; second revised ed., 1909. The book was very soon translated into English by G. Showerman (1911), himself the author of a book on Cybele: *The Great Mother of the Gods* (Wisconsin 1901); this translation, of the second French edition, was re-issued in 1956 by Dover, and reprinted frequently

research has revised or questioned almost all of his assumptions, which were themselves largely taken over from his immediate predecessors writing in French, especially Ernest Renan and Victor Duruy. Since I do not intend here to provide a proper survey of the literature since Cumont, I will restrict myself to providing a summary account of it.[3]

I have already made clear that in my view the most characteristic typological feature of the oriental cults was the promise of salvation, or rather, more precisely, their deities' power to overcome Fate. I need to express myself carefully here, since over the years many scholars have questioned this crucial element of the old grand narrative.[4] The objection is indeed partly justified, since I freely admit that mistakes were made in interpreting the characteristics of these gods by assigning to them features documented in Christianity but not in the oriental cults. In fact, quite apart from the borrowings and transfers between paganism and Christianity in antiquity, modern scholarship, in making use of information outside the strict limits of its applicability, has encouraged the development of what we might call an 'interpretative osmosis'.

We can thus no longer confidently claim that the mystery-component of the oriental cults offered their adherents the hope of resurrection, or the firm promise of eternal life in the company of the god.[5] In older

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thereafter, most recently in 2003. (The third edition of 1928 was simply a reprint of the second: Bongard-Levine et al. 2007, 87 n. 147. The much superior 4th ed. has never been translated into English; a 5th French edition appeared in 2006 as part of the systematic republication of Cumont's works; see Bonnet and van Haeperen 2006.)

[3] Several articles in *ANRW* provide bibliographic surveys of this process of revision and re-interpretation, e.g. B.M. Metzger, A Classified Bibliography of the Graeco-Roman Mystery Religions, 1924–1977, *ANRW* II,17.3 (1984) 1259–1423; Beck 1984 and 2004b. It is still worth consulting the older surveys by Pettazzoni 1924/1997 and Metzger 1955.

[4] Doubtless following the scepticism of Wilamowitz 1931–2 regarding the soteriological promises of these cults, Prümm 1943/1954, 313ff. and then R. Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting*. Transl. R. Fuller (London and New York 1956) [orig. 1949], 173 rejected the idea that Mithras was a saviour-god in the Cumontian sense. A generation later, both Brelich 1965 and Frankfort 1958 were likewise sceptical of the entire soteriological scenario; the sharpest recent critics have been MacMullen 1981 and Burkert 1987: 66–88; cf. the doubts of Sfameni Gasparro 1985 regarding Cybele and Attis. The power of the mystery gods to overcome Fate—admittedly the case of Mithras is an at least partial exception—is however not questioned by the author of the most exhaustive study of the topic, Magris 1985, 2: 505ff. We shall have occasion to return to this difficult issue later.

[5] It is precisely on these general questions that subsequent scholarship has distanced itself most sharply from Cumont's assumptions. Nevertheless I think that this has involved the rather questionable triumph of minimalist positions, hypercritical in rela-

scholarship, the redeeming, healing and salvific character of these cults was nudged in the direction of what is understood as 'salvation' from a Christian perspective, namely evading the malignity of Fate. But now that such a marked dualism in relation to post-mortem fate has been rejected, it is far more difficult to decide quite what the offer of salvation referred to.[6] It would suffice if it were simply a matter of depriving Fate of its inexorability, both in the real world and in some imaginary universe, that is, in both the 'locative' and the 'utopian' dimension,[7] in such a way that the threat posed to the Graeco-Roman cultural system by the existential unpredictability of daily life would be fundamentally allayed. Even so, however, it is difficult precisely to define the offer and its effects.

The words Cicero puts into his own mouth in his dialogue *De legibus*, which cannot possibly be suspected of Christian contamination, provide us with one view of the claims and significance of the mysteries. Although he refers specifically to Eleusis, the point made holds good for the other mysteries that took Eleusis as their model:

> Marcus: *Nam mihi cum multa eximia divinaque videntur Athenae tuae* [a reference to his interlocutor, T. Pomponius Atticus] *peperisse atque in vitam hominum attulisse, tum nihil melius illis mysteriis, quibus ex agresti immanique vita exculti ad humanitatem et mitigati sumus, initiaque appellantur ita re vera principia vitae cognovimus, neque solum cum laetitia vivendi rationem accepimus, sed etiam cum spe meliore moriendi.*[8]
>
> Cicero, *De leg.* 2.36

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tion to the evidence and little disposed towards moderate solutions. I do not subscribe to the maxim *in medio veritas*, since the truth may lie far from the mid-point between two scholars; there may always be a third, a fourth, an nth possibility…I therefore do not claim personally to prefer easy eclectic positions.

[6] We have moved from a historiographical situation in which salvation was conceived solely in eschatological terms to one in which the sole admissible content is intramundane. I have no doubt that the reality was much more ambiguous, rich and subtle, so that we need to think in terms of a flexible model. I prefer to leave the question undecided here and come back to it in section 3 of this chapter, on the world beyond.

[7] I adopt the terms introduced by J.Z. Smith 1990, 121–42.

[8] "It seems to me that, among the many admirable and divine things you Athenians have established to the advantage of human society, there is nothing better than the mysteries, by means of which we have been polished and softened into civilised behaviour out of the austerities of barbarism. They are justly called initiations, for it is mainly through them that we learn the basic principles of living, not only the art of taking pleasure in life but also of dying with greater hope."

In our case, victory over Fate is confirmed by the texts we possess concerning the oriental cults. The clearest formulation occurs in the 'Self-predication of Isis' texts, where the goddess Isis claims to be victorious over Fate: Ἐγὼ τὸ εἱμαρμένον νικῶ. Ἐμοῦ τὸ εἱμαρμένον ἀκούει, 'I overcome Fate; Fate hearkens to me'.[9] Nor did Serapis lag behind her, for in the account of one of his miracles we find the expression: [τὰς] Μοίρας γὰρ ἐγὼ μεταμφιάζω, 'I change the garb of [the] Moirai',[10] and an oracle of Apollo, presumably from Miletus or Didyma, says of him: αὐτὸς γὰρ μοῦνος καὶ τὰς Μοίρας μεθοδεύει, 'He alone even gets round the Moirai'.[11] Dozens of people could attest to his individual saving acts: μεσταὶ δὲ ἀγοραί…καὶ λιμένες καὶ τὰ εὐρύχωρα τῶν πόλεων τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα ἐξηγουμένων.[12] However the most significant text relating to this issue is a passage from Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*:

> *Vives autem beatus, vives in mea tutela gloriosus, et cum spatium saeculi tui permensus ad inferos demearis, ibi quoque in ipso subterraneo semirotundo me, quam vides, Acherontis tenebris interlucentem Stygiisque penetralibus regnantem, campos Eysios incolens ipse, tibi propitiam frequens adorabis. Quodsi sedulis obsequiis et religiosis*

[9] Totti no. 1 §55f., cf. 46f. (tr. R.M. Grant). Totti also conveniently provides the references to the four known versions, most importantly that from Kyme = *I.Kyme* no. 41 (where Engelmann sets out the stemma, p. 101) = *RICIS* 302/0204 = Sanzi 2003, 213–5 no. 46. See further nn. 289 and 290 below; W. Peek, *Der Isishymnus von Andros* (Berlin 1930) 120ff.; D. Müller, *Ägypten und die griechischen Isis-Aretalogien* (Berlin 1961) 74–85; Griffiths 1975, 243; also J. Bergman, 'I overcome Fate, Fate hearkens to me', in H. Ringgren (ed.), *Fatalistic Beliefs in Religion, Folklore and Literature: Papers read at the Symposium on Fatalistic Beliefs held at Åbo on 7th–8th September 1964* (Stockholm 1967) 35–51, where he shows that Isis' claim to be Mistress of Fate was derived from Amon, the Egyptian creator-god, and that it was mainly understood to mean overcoming misfortune. Griffiths 1991, 323 bluntly asserts that the term *salus*, salvation, in the cult of Isis connotes a secure and protected life in this world and the next.

[10] *PBerol.* 10525 = D.L. Page, *Select Papyri 3* (Loeb ed.) 424–29, no. 96 = Totti no. 12, l. 13 (III^{P}). The supplement is by L. Fahz.

[11] The oracle is preserved only in *Cod. Vindob*. 130 and *Cod. Laur.* 37; the addressee is Timaenetus (probably II^{P}). The text is most conveniently to be found as Totti no. 60. On the later oracles of Apollo, see now A. Busine, *Paroles d'Apollon: pratiques et traditions oraculaires dans l'Antiquité tardive*. RGRW 156 (Leyden 2005), though, as far as I can see, she seems to have missed this one. However she does list two other oracles from Apollo at Didyma that tell the enquirer that he may pray to Serapis: *I.Milet*. 1.7, 205b = her cat. no. 43 (from the Serapeum in Miletus), pp. 59, 97.

[12] Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 45.30; cf. also the claim that Serapis has raised individuals from the dead (οὗτος κειμένους ἀνέστησεν), ibid. 29.

> *ministeriis et tenacibus castimoniis numen nostrum promeruis, scies ultra statuta fato tuo spatia vitam quoque tibi prorogare mihi tantum licere.*[13]
>
> Apuleius, *Met.* 11.6

I believe this to be quite characteristic.[14] The goddess promises a blessed existence in the world beyond, after a life-span prolonged beyond the limits set by Fate, thus combining the two forms of salvation, physical and spiritual. The text is thus a marvellous précis of what we are entitled to see as a sort of Isiac creed, or at any rate a sketch of one. In section 2.3 of this Chapter, on the World Beyond, I discuss how far the other cults aside from that of Isis shared in the soteriological promise, however we are to understand it, that in my view is central to these mystery-cults. I accept that they differed in the degree of emphasis they placed on life in the other world; but would claim that on the whole they laid more stress on it than traditional paganism, and in that respect were somewhat closer to Christianity.[15]

Before concluding this introductory section it is worth thinking about how the mystery-component of the oriental cults has been understood as a religious phenomenon. What we might call Christian 'contamination' is by no means solely a feature of the evidence from Antiquity. It re-appears in modern interpretation. An obvious example is this passage from Mircea Eliade, acceptance of which would require considerable prior contextualisation:

> For the history of religion, the particular importance of the Greco-oriental mysteries lies in the fact that they illustrate the need for a personal

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[13] "Moreover you will live in happiness, you will live in glory, under my guardianship. And when you have completed your life's span and travel down to the dead, there too, even in the hemisphere under the earth, you will find me, whom you see now, shining among the shades of Acheron, and holding court in the deep recesses of the Styx, and while you dwell in the Elysian Fields I will favour you and you will constantly worship me. But if by assiduous obedience, worshipful service, and determined celibacy you win the favour of my godhead, you will know that I—and I alone—can even prolong your life beyond the limits determined by your fate" (tr. Hanson).

[14] For my views on how we are to read this novel, see n. 278 below, and Chap. 4 n. 527. On the roles of fate and providence in the novel, see N. Fick-Nicole, De fati et providentiae et fortunae ratione, quae inter Apulei Metamorphoseon libros intercedit, in J. Blänsdorf (ed.), *Loquela vivida: donum natalicium N. Sallmann oblatum* (Würzburg 1999) 59–73.

[15] Liebeschuetz 1992, 251. Liebeschuetz' is a considered view, one that seeks to discount positions which, consciously or unconsciously, take Christianity as their point of reference.

> religious experience engaging man's entire existence, that is, to use Christian terminology, as including his 'salvation' in eternity.[16]

It is unclear whether Eliade understands the need for a personal religious experience here as something inherent in all human beings, or just those of antiquity;[17] and the matter is further confused by the use of the Christian term 'salvation'. Unless such a claim refers to a specific historical period at which such a personal need became manifest, it is difficult to accept, and I remain sceptical despite the fact that Eliade's position would be convenient for my argument. Enough of methodology, however: I must resume the thread of the argument.

The relationship between Christianity and the oriental cults has provoked much debate. I deal with some specific issues later on, and conclude the book with a chapter devoted to the historical—and historiographical—relation between the two. This is however the appropriate moment to raise a basic conceptual problem. Christian monotheism is hostile to the position of restrained tolerance that characterises the contemporary academy. In order to understand this intolerance, the academy investigates the origins of Christian monotheism, but this very research, paradoxically enough, simply adds fuel to the flames.

Whereas monotheism is for some the ground of the authentic religious feeling that sets Christianity at the top of the tree of religious evolution, which is tantamount to claiming its intrinsic superiority, others, emphasising the deep-rooted monotheistic tendencies in the Empire, reject the claim that monotheism is original to Christianity. In support of their thesis, they sometimes refer to the adherents of the mystery religions. In my view, there are two relevant considerations here. One concerns the very process of constructing Christian exclusivism, which I will not go into here, but which we need to bear in mind if we are to maintain a distance between religious discourse and its practice, as well as the attitudes of the congregations and their leaders towards

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[16] M. Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: the Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth* (New York 1958) 113.

[17] Cf. Burkert 1996, a programmatic book in which he claims "the existence of biological patterns of actions, reactions, and feelings activated and re-elaborated through ritual practice and verbalised teachings, with anxiety playing a foremost role…Religion follows in the tracks of biology". Another form of the naturalising argument is proposed by P. Boyer, *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1994).

aberrations.[18] The second, which is more directly relevant here, concerns the issue of exclusivity, and the syncretistic tendencies that have been descried during the Imperial period.[19]

Despite its frequent repetition, I have little faith in the idea that there was a process of monotheistic syncretism that culminated in Christianity.[20] In fact, Christianity found itself obliged to accommodate the polytheism that prevailed among the majority of the population by sacralising a variety of inferior beings and so created, under the aggressive banner of monotheism, an authentic, hierarchically-structured, Christian pantheon. Viewed in that light, the tendency to syncretise is not an historical reality at all, or at least not one that necessarily moves in a 'monotheistic' direction. A quite separate issue is whether there was a political will within paganism to integrate as many cults as possible into an hierarchical system intended to enhance the credibility and the interests of the imperial centre. At any rate, it is quite impossible to claim, on the basis of certain formulae of adoration characteristic of the oriental cults, that they too contributed to a some sort of monotheistic imperative. These expressions in fact arise from a philosophical stance and had little impact on religious practice, however much the triumph of Christianity has made people think that the onward march of monotheism was irresistible.

As the lucid discussion by Henk Versnel has shown, the best image for this phenomenon is the concept of 'henotheism' (1990, 35–38 *et passim*).[21] The term, which is modern, is calqued upon the formula

[18] The point concerns the process of giving formal expression to Christian exclusivism, which of course only became sharp-edged once it became meshed with political power. In any case, anyone interested in how Late-Antique Christian exclusivism expressed itself, and the sort of things that were done in its name, should consult Trombley 1993–4; E. Sauer, *The Archaeology of Religious Hatred in the Roman and Early Medieval World* (Stroud and Charleston SC 2003); or Hahn 2006. Some pertinent reflections on pagan reactions in a lecture at the American Academy, Rome on 3 May 2007 by S. Anghel, Burying the Gods: Hiding Statues from Christians in Late Antiquity.

[19] The concept of syncretism is a sort of joker, used to excess by historians of ancient religion. Its ambiguity renders it extremely useful to those unwilling to define their terms very precisely. I prefer to use it cautiously; see the remarks by C. Stewart and R. Shaw (eds.), *Syncretism/Anti-syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis* (London and New York 1994) 1–26. On Cumont's loose, quite untheorised, use of the term, note Motte 1999.

[20] Cf. the welcome criticism of the idea that the epithet ὕψιστος implies a pagan tendency towards monotheism by N. Belayche, *Hypsistos.* Une voie de l'exaltation des dieux dans le polythéisme gréco-romain, *ARG* 7 (2005) 34–55.

[21] The concept has unfortunately not become widely familiar (there is no lemma either in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*[3] or *Der Neue Pauly*). T. Kotuła, Les Apologistes

εἷς ὁ θεός (ordinarily translated 'one is the god' but in fact meaning: 'this/our god is no. 1'), which implies not exclusivism but a more or less marked preference on the dedicator's part. It bears repeating that henotheism, despite its relative frequency in our sources, was not a widespread form of belief in the Empire. It is also worth pointing out that the adherents of the oriental cults similarly formed an insignificant minority within the overall population, their importance inversely

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africains du III[e] siècle face aux tendances monothéistes païennes, *Histoire et archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord. Spectacles, vie portuaire, religion. Actes du V[e] Colloque international* (Paris 1992) 153–58 uses it appropriately, as does Turcan 2000, 145–52 ('L'hénothéisme mithriaque'). Recent publications display a surprising ignorance of Versnel's work and continue uncritically to insist on 'monotheistic tendencies'. I think the reason must be that the term 'monotheism' is believed to have more attraction than 'henotheism'. If one looks at the most recent contribution to the topic, Athanassiadi and Frede 1999, one is astonished at the confusions that the contributors land themselves in by talking constantly about 'monotheism' in a polytheistic context, especially since they manage to believe that monotheism was an inescapable tendency. The term 'henotheism' only occurs once (M.L. West, Towards Monotheism, in Athanassiadi and Frede 1999, 21–40), yet both he and his co-contributors would have found it much more useful than the fancy label given the seminar which in turn gave its name to the volume. And given that West describes the concept perfectly ("Where we see a god emerging as plenipotentiary, the existence of other gods is not denied, but they are reduced in importance or status, and he is praised as the greatest among them", p. 24), it is even more extraordinary that they continue to talk about 'monotheistic tendencies'; and that even Wolf Liebeschuetz squeezes his foot into the same shoe, when his conclusion is rather that we have to do with a sort of personal syncretism, especially among the Neo-Platonists, though in practice they were all polytheists (Liebeschuetz, 1999). We unfortunately encounter the same terminological error in Digeser 2000, aggravated by the fact that, dealing only with a literary text, she universalises the movement in favour of monotheism. The truth is, I think, quite different: it was not paganism that became monotheist, but Christianity that became polytheist. It was thus that the Church in the end required the faithful to venerate the Virgin, the angels, and the saints as minor divinities, as substitutes for their now abandoned manifold divine beings. Christian monotheism is actually nothing but a dogmatic claim, formally accepted by Christians—despite the utter illogicality of the idea of the Trinity—who, however, continued to behave in practice exactly like the adherents of pagan polytheism [a remark that scarcely applies to Protestants, however!]. Moreover, the project of discovering monotheism in the oriental cults, suggested by the editors as the subject of another seminar ("So crucial an area of pagan monotheism as the theology of the mystery cults has not been touched on in this volume; it is our intention to examine this important theme in a future seminar", ibid. p. 20 n. 49) is perfectly *de trop*. If they had bothered to open G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth. Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton 1993), or Bradley 1998, their planning might have been more to the point. Fowden, basically following Versnel, summarises the differences between the concepts polytheism, henotheism and monotheism (p. 5), and rejects the tendency to extend monotheism into the semantic range of henotheism (e.g. p. 40f.); cf. too the discussion of Julian's Mithraism (pp. 52–56). As for Bradley, he understands Lucius' transformation not as a conversion but as an example of henotheism (1998, 331).

proportional to their number.[22] No doubt economic factors, as well as the desire to assert their beliefs, should be invoked to explain their prominence in the epigraphic and monumental evidence.

In the following section, I first set out some of the basic premises that define the relations between the oriental deities and their adherents; the remainder examines each of the myths successively in some detail, teasing out the major themes.

1. Cosmic Order and the Nature of the Divine

> *omnis enim per se divum natura necessest,*
> *immortali aevo summa cum pace fruatur*
> *semota ab nostris rebus seiunctaque longe.*
> *Nam privata dolore omni, privata periclis,*
> *ipsa suis pollens opibus, nil indiga nostri,*
> *nec bene promeritis capitur neque tangitur ira.*[23]
>
> Lucretius, *de rerum natura* 2, 646–52

It is typical of the gods of the oriental cults that they have some experience of human existence characterised by direct contact with death. Some indeed suffered it themselves, which would be unthinkable for the Olympian gods, whose manifold experiences do not include their own deaths. Only a rhetorician such as Lactantius in the early fourth century AD could lump all these deities together:

> Let us please consider the anguish of the gods who were unlucky. Isis lost her son, and Ceres her daughter; Latona was driven out and harried all over the world, only with difficulty finding a little island to give birth on. (7) The mother of the gods fell in love with a pretty youth, and when she caught him with a paramour, she castrated him and made him a eunuch, and that is why his ritual is celebrated even now by the priests called Galli. Juno persecuted her brother's paramours so fiercely because she could not get pregnant herself … (9) The indecency of Venus is beyond words,

[22] Since it is not my intention to survey either the expansion or the sociology of the oriental cults (this will be one of the topics of a projected book on the mysteries in Hispania), I may here cite three such studies relating to our deities: Schillinger 1979; Mora 1990; and Clauss 1992. For IOM Dolichenus, see E. Sanzi, Dimension sociale et organisation du culte dolichénien, in G.M. Bellelli and U. Bianchi (eds.), *Orientalia Sacra Urbis Romae: Dolichena et Heliopolitana*. Studia Archaeologica 84 (Rome 1996) 477–513.

[23] "For it is essential to the very nature of deity that it should enjoy immortal existence in utter tranquillity, aloof and detached from our affairs. It is free from all pain and peril, strong in its own resources, exempt from any need of us, indifferent to our merits and immune from anger" (tr. R.E. Latham).

> prostituting herself to the lust of one and all, not only gods but also men. She it was who bore Harmonia as a result of Mars' famous rape of her, and by Mercury she had Hermaphroditus, who was born bi-sexual. By Jupiter she had Cupid, by Anchises Aeneas, by Butes Eryx; only with Adonis did she fail, because he was gored to death by a boar when still a boy. (10) As it says in the *Sacred History*, she started prostitution, and promoted it on Cyprus as a way the women could make money from public hire of their bodies: she required it of them to avoid herself being seen as the only wicked woman, with a gross appetite for men.
>
> Lactantius, *Inst. div.* 1.17.6–10 (tr. A. Bowen)

Despite this rhetorical invective, which carries on to take in other deities too, it is quite clear that death is almost completely foreign to the gods of the traditional pantheon, and that Lactantius' bundling them all together is a travesty. Moreover, the mystery gods' direct experience of death is fundamental to what they were subsequently able to achieve: life can triumph only because they have gained immortality. Death brings them close to human beings, while the rebirth they offer has a grandeur about it unattainable by the traditional gods of the Graeco-Roman pantheon.

In the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, the History of Religions school and the Comparativists fostered a caste of mind that favoured collocations nearly as arbitrary as those of Lactantius. They asserted that the experience of death in the oriental cults was the same in each case: the gods suffered it physically but succeeded in overcoming it by virtue of their vital force, their power as creators, demiurges, and saviours. Osiris died by being cut up into pieces, but Isis managed to revive him. Cybele caused the death of Attis, but allowed him to carry on living. Though he did not suffer death himself, Mithras slaughtered the bull from which life arose anew. Death and immortality were interpreted as symbols of the annual regeneration of nature, which was understood to be the central focus of these religions. A century of debate has served to show that the reality was far more nuanced than it once seemed.[24] Osiris was resurrected but his resurrection was restricted to the Underworld; the very existence of Attis' resurrection

[24] Cf. "Mais ce qui demeure essentiel, au niveau des pratiques cultuelles (tout à fait différentes de ce que peut produire la spéculation philosophique), c'est la diversité, la multiplicité, la distinction": P. Borgeaud, L'Histoire (comparée) des Religions: une discipline au futur, in G. Sfameni Gasparro (ed.), *Themes and problems in the History of Religions in Contemporary Europe: Proceedings of the International Seminar, Messina March 30–31, 2001* (Cosenza 2002) 67–77 at 76, on Mother or 'Great' goddesses.

in any form has been seriously doubted; Mithras himself could never have had anything to do with resurrection at all. So much can be freely admitted. In my view, however, the triumph over Fate remains a constant; and, from a certain point in the High Empire, salvation in the other world came to be a deep conviction shared among many of the adherents of the oriental cults. The main reason for thinking this is that their central rituals, to which I shall later devote more particular attention, are in fact initiatory, and were replete with the symbolism of death and resurrection.[25] Since this symbolism is so transparent, it seems perverse to deny the centrality of the belief in these cults.

Of course, it is not merely the fact that they have lived that defines these gods as mystery-divinities. There can be nothing more anthropomorphic than the Homeric gods, with their enviable vices and virtues. However the most striking peculiarity of those traditional deities was that they had no share in one of the most private of human experiences, death. They were immortal. By contrast, the gods of the oriental cults shared with their adherents in one way or another the ultimate rite of passage, the transition from being to not-being.[26] Thanks to this experience they acquired a special claim to be able to attend to the problems, anxieties and needs of human beings, so much so that these concerns are to all appearances the main preoccupations of the divine world. This was certainly the case in the first three centuries AD.

The myths however are more overtly concerned with the establishment, or the re-establishment, of the order of the cosmos. In the case of the Egyptian cults, this order was established by the combat in heaven between Horus and Seth; Isis is consequently celebrated as mistress of the universe, exercising power over gods, humans and nature alike.[27] The same emphasis is also evident in Mithraic iconography, where the cult-relief offers a symbolic representation of this assertion of order.[28]

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[25] The myth recounted the experiences and suffering of these gods and was reproduced in the ritual: Isis, for example, did not allow her sufferings to be engulfed in silence and oblivion, but "infused images, suggestions and representations of her experiences at that time" into the sacred rites: Plutarch, *De Iside* 27, 361d–e.

[26] See the rather uneven Louvain collection (Ries 1986b), which however contains some interesting contributions on transition-rituals in the mysteries; cf. Bianchi 1986b. More discussion of this issue in Chap. 4.2.a.

[27] See the inventory drawn up by Malaise 1986a, 27ff.; cf. Mora, 1990, 2: 60f.

[28] The bibliography here is very large. For the moment I just need to cite Beck 2004a and 2006. The theme continues to be of central interest in Mithraic studies, as is plain from the number of 'decodings' of the tauroctony-scene (on which see Beck 2004c). One example would be Ulansey 1989, who, whatever the merits of his

Although the case with the Phrygian cults is not quite so clear, there too the connection with the cosmos is undubitable. Both literary texts and iconography attest to the cosmic roles played by both Cybele and Attis. Thus Lucretius alludes to a cosmological interpretation of Cybele's lion-drawn chariot: *aeris in spatio magnam pendere docentes tellurem neque posse in terra sistere terram*,[29] that seems to be picked up by a coin of M. Plaetorius Cestianus as curule aedile for 68 or 67 BC, showing Cybele's head with a globe in front of it.[30] The evidence for Attis is more extensive.[31] Indeed, the process of turning him into a 'divine

particular thesis, at any rate accepts the Roman cult as the product of an intellectual exercise by a small group of individuals at a specific point in time; see also Beck 1998a (= 2004a, 31–44). That may be so, as we shall have occasion to see; but we should not forget the point made by E. Will, ap. J. Duchesne-Guillemin, Sur l'origine des mystères de Mithra, *CRAI* 1990, 281–4 at 285f., who observes that it is not theologians who create religions, but religions that make theologians. I incline to agree with him, notwithstanding the case of Serapis, which might be considered a counter-example. At the same time, one should note Beck's analysis of the relations between the initiatory grades and the planets as reproduced in the structure of the cult and the rituals (Beck 1988, 7–11). Ulansey modifies Beck's scheme by identifying Mithras with the constellation Perseus, which makes no sense from the point of view of the religious content. Ulansey's 'extravagance' lies much more in his scarcely-qualified conclusion.

[29] *De rerum nat*. 2. 602f.: "Thus teaching that the great world is poised in the spacious air and that earth cannot rest on earth". The lions were later interpreted as pointing to an association between Cybele, now understood as universal Providence, and Helios: Julian, *Or.* 5. 167b; cf. Sfameni Gasparro 1981, 401f.

[30] Cf. Summers 1996, 341. For Cestianus see F. Münzer, s.v. Plaetorius no. 16, *RE* 20 (1950) 1950–52. I am not convinced however that the glass globe (if that is what it is) in the 'Cybele' (or Venus) fresco in the taberna of the house of M. Vecilius Verecundus at Pompeii (Reg. IX, ins. 7.1) represents the world ruled by Cybele and Attis (*CCCA* 4, 17f. no. 42).

[31] Frazer 1914, 1: 281ff., wrongly imagined that the key lay in the connection between Attis and Zeus, supposedly suggested by the epithet *Papas* (which obviously means 'Father') in the first of the so-called Hymns to Attis collected by the Christian polemicist pseudo-Hippolytus, in the context of his attack on the Naassenes (a gnostic group which had developed its own discursive account of the myth of Attis, cf. Borgeaud 2004, 102–7). Nevertheless the passage is important in relation to Attis' cosmic dimension. It reads: καὶ οἱ Φρύγες ἄλλοτε μὲν Πάπαν, ποτὲ δ' <αὖ> νέκυν ἢ θεὸν ἢ τὸν ἄκαρπον ἢ αἰπόλον ἢ χλοερὸν στάχυν ἀμηθέντα, ἢ <τ>ὸν πολύκαρπον ἔτικτεν ἀμύγδαλος, ἀνέρα συρικτάν, 'And the Phrygians [name you] sometimes Papas, sometimes Corpse, or God, or Fruitless, or Goat-herd, or "Already-harvested unripe Ear of grain", or "the fruitful One to whom the almond-tree gave birth", Male flute-player' (*Refutatio* 5.9.8 = Sanzi 2003, 287: Cybele no. 41). For, earlier in this section, [Hippolytus] interprets the epiclesis 'Aipolos' (Goat-herd) as the equivalent of ἀ<ε>ιπόλος, 'eternal sphere': 'he constantly moves (ὁ ἀεὶ πολῶν) and revolves and carries round the entire cosmos by his circular motion' (5.8.34, omitted by Sanzi). See the analyses of M. Marcovich, The Naassene Psalm in [Hippolytus], *Haer*. 5.10.2, in B. Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, 2 (Leyden 1981) 770–78 = idem, *Studies in Graeco-Roman Religion and Gnosticism* (Leyden 1988) 80–89; Sfameni Gasparro 1981, 405–08; Turcan

being with cosmic and pantocratic prerogatives' is nowadays clearly recognised (Lancellotti 2002, 135). There are numerous references to it in the fourth century and later, such as the following passages from Sallustius, the friend of the emperor Julian, like him a proponent of the allegorical interpretation of myth and the mystical interpretation of cult-practice:

> The Mother of the gods is a life-giving goddess (ζωογόνος), and therefore she is called mother, while Attis is creator (δημιουργός) of things that come into being and perish, and therefore he is said to have been found by the river Gallos: for Gallos suggests the *Galaxios Kyklos* (Milky Way).
>
> Sallustius, Περὶ τῶν θεῶν καὶ τοῦ κόσμου §4, p. 8 ll. 3–7 Nock (tr. Nock)[32]

And again:

> The Mother loves Attis and gives him heavenly powers (signified by the cap [πῖλος]).
>
> ibid., p. 8 lines 8–10; cf. Julian, *Mother* 165b; 170d–171a[33]

Another explicit passage, Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.21.9, seems at first sight to be still later, but points us in fact to one of the main sources of this solar syncretism, Porphyry's Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων, written in the third quarter of the third century AD. Macrobius writes: *Solem vero sub nomine Attinis ornant fistula et virga.*[34] The earlier date is confirmed by a passage from Arnobius, *Adv. gent.* 5.42.5, whose source must also lie at least as far back: *Attidem cum nominamus, solem . . . significamus et dicimus*.[35] Porphyry is indeed one of the nodal points in the development of the syncretistic integration of quite diverse divinities into association with the Sun.

1996b: 393–95; Lancellotti 2000: 272–84; eadem 2002, 115–18. H. Graillot claimed that Attis might also have functioned as a 'Father Heaven' over against Cybele's 'Mother Earth' (1912, 15), though the suggestion has never found favour. In my view, however, it could help to understand the significance of the myth in a wider sense, once the symbolisms had been merged.

[32] = Sanzi 2003, 295: Cybele no. 44; cf. Julian, *Or* 5. 165b–c; 166a–b.

[33] On the correspondences between Sallustius and Julian here, cf. G. Rochefort, Le Περὶ θεῶν καὶ κόσμου de Saloustios et l'influence de l'empereur Julien, *REG* 69 (1956) 50–72 at 61.

[34] = Sanzi 2003, 307: Cybele no. 53. "[The Phrygians] decorate the Sun, under the name of Attis, with a pan-pipe and a *pedum* (shepherd's crook)."

[35] "When we name Attis . . . we mean and speak of the sun." On Arnobius' aims here, cf. Mora 1994, 190f. Note also in the same sense Firmicus Maternus, *De errore* 8.1–3 (probably also from Porphyry) and the late texts cited by Lancellotti 2002, 135. For her part, the Mater Magna becomes the mother and consort of Zeus-Jupiter, mistress of all life, the cause of all coming into being (Julian, *Or.* 5. 166a); cf. Lancellotti 2002, 128.

If Attis was drawn into this process of neo-Platonist syncretism, however, it was because he already had solar, and more generally cosmic, associations: these more or less novel formulations contain ideas that originated much earlier than Porphyry, in a cosmology current within the cult of the Mater Magna. For the solar association of Attis appears in the visual evidence already in the second century AD, most strikingly in the well-known image of him dedicated by C. Cartilius Euplus in the temple in Ostia: the god reclines, naked and emasculate, beside the River Gallus, and is wearing a Phrygian cap fitted with solar rays (Pl. 1).[36] Indeed, the very earliest representation of this type, the bust of Attis attached to a dish in the Hildesheim treasure, now in the Antikenmuseum Berlin, where the god's Phrygian cap is decorated with stars, is generally dated to the late first century AD, if not even a little earlier.[37] References to Attis' cosmic role indeed usually take this form, of stars (and once the moon), or an eagle, represented on his Phrygian cap, or on his clothes.[38] The Naassene 'hymns' to Attis, which I have already mentioned, and which are generally dated to the second century AD, also clearly allude to this feature of the cosmology. At the close of the second fragment, for example, he is referred to as ποιμὴν λευκῶν ἄστρων, 'shepherd of the shining stars'.[39] Elsewhere, the author provides the Naassene exegesis of the phrase, namely that

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[36] Vat. Mus. MGP, inv. 10785. Found in a special deposit with two other items (probably for safe-keeping) in the portico on the S. side of the Campus. See Helbig^4 1: 827 no. 1153 (E. Simon) = Vermaseren 1977: 61 with pl. 44 = *CCCA* 3: 123 no. 394 = Vermaseren 1986 no. 312 = Rieger 2004, 282 cat. no. MMA 3; 138–41 with pls. 107–108c (good commentary).

[37] U. Gehrig, *Hildesheimer Silberschatz aus dem Antikenmuseum*^{2} (Berlin 1980) no. 14; Schwertheim 1974, 244f. no. 218b (late I^a–early I^p); *CCCA* 6: 21 no. 65 with pl.XIII (late Hellenistic); Vermaseren 1986 no. 345 (late I^a–I^p).

[38] Julian, *Or.* 5. 165b7f. says that the Mother of the Gods fell in love with Attis and gave him a Phrygian cap adorned with stars (τὸν ἀστερωτὸν πῖλον); this cap is then equated with the sky that surrounds us, which is said to cover Attis' head; consequently the River Gallus must 'really' be the Milky Way. The most familiar image of the Phrygian cap associated with astral/cosmic symbols, in this case, the moon and a star, is the altar from Isola Sacra illustrated in Floriani Squarciapino 1962 pl. IV.6 (not referred to in the text!; cf. however p. 71, List of figures); cf. Sfameni Gasparro 1981: 389; Lancellotti 2000: 274 n. 205. Stars also decorate the Phrygian cap on some statuettes and coins: Vermaseren 1966, 51 with pl. XXXII. 1 and 4 (statuette, undated); Vermaseren 1986 no. 368 (coin of Ancyra, second half II^p); and they sometimes appear on his clothes (Vermaseren 1966, 33 n. 2 with pl. XIV.2: coin of Cyzicus, second half II^p; p. 51 with pl. XXXII.2, statuette from Asia Minor). For the eagle, cf. R. Turcan, L'aigle du *pileus*, in de Boer and Edridge 1978, 1287–92 with pl. CCLVIII = CCCA 3: 102 no. 358 (*ILS* 4144).

[39] [Hippolytus], *Ref.* 5.9.9 Marcovich = Sanzi 2003, 287: Cybele no. 41.

his human imperfection is resolved by the self-castration that enables him to become ἀρσενόθηλυς, hermaphrodite, and thus re-assume his divine perfection as καινὴ κτίσις, καινὸς ἄνθρωπος, a new creature, a new human-being—though we have no reason to suppose that this characteristically gnostic interpretation was also available within the cult (*Ref.* 5.7.13–15).[40]

However, I do not want at this point to get bogged down in details. The actual content of the narratives is surely the best introduction to the nature of these divinities and their relation to the cosmic order. At the end of the chapter, I go on to discuss the place of human beings in this world, and in the world beyond.

a. *The Egyptian Cults*

i. *The Myth of Isis and Osiris*

Summing up his account of the myth of Isis and Osiris, Plutarch observes that it contains accounts of ἀποριῶν καὶ παθῶν, of helplessness and suffering (*De Iside* 20, 358f3). To that extent, they can be taken as paradigmatic. Although they were originally independent deities, Isis and Osiris are found in association from the third millennium BC; the earliest documentary allusions to them occur in the Pyramid Texts (Kees 1952). From then on, we find numerous allusions to the myth, but none of them are as complete as that provided by Plutarch in *De Iside et Osiride*, esp. chaps. 12–19, 355d–358d.[41]

Plutarch's aim was to offer a capacious version that would at the same time try to eliminate the inconsistencies (cf. Froidefond 1988, 15). It is therefore not so much a literary version of a popular narrative as an intellectual compilation by a writer working under the political pressures of the day.[42] As such, the text is by no means pellucid: beneath

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[40] Cf. Sfameni Gasparro 1981, 384–86, 388f., and Lancellotti 2000, 278–81. Sfameni Gasparro, who argues very much as I do for the early development of a cosmic Attis, unfortunately relies on the older, Antonine, date for the Parabiago *lanx* (389 n. 45), cf. n. 344 below.

[41] Plutarch died shortly after AD 120 (cf. K. Ziegler, s.v. Plutarchos, *RE* 21 [1951] 640f.) and it is now generally agreed that *De Iside* was one of his last works; Griffiths 1970, 16f., dates it to c. 120.

[42] As Ziegler points out (ibid. 845f.), Plutarch had been a pupil of the Middle Platonist Ammonius, who was an Egyptian, and had himself visited Alexandria. Richter 2001 sees the work as a straightforward assertion of the primacy of Greek philosophy over Egyptian cult. This is too simple: on the keen interest of the later Stoics and Middle Platonism in 'oriental' religions, which were taken to contain traces of the supposedly

the intelligible surface narrative there lurk depths that confer upon the work a suggestivity entirely appropriate to a story about superhuman beings. It also possesses the merit of providing a rationalisation of the myth-variants at the very moment when the oriental cults were arriving at their floruit. It is of course not my intention to privilege the information provided by intellectualisers of religion.[43] For lack of alternatives, however, we must use what we have, according each text its just value. In that regard, Plutarch's project is not so much didactic as ostensibly objectivising, in an attempt to render comprehensible, that is, in terms of early second-century Graeco-Roman philosophy, a myth that was ultimately Egyptian, though by now widely disseminated in the Graeco-Roman world.[44] The popularity of Isis at this time over the entire Mediterranean area must, I think, have meant that his re-working of the myth was greeted not as something bizarre but as desirable and needful. It was accepted by contemporaries precisely inasmuch as it could be seen as a guide for study, and not because it was in any way an official or canonical version. And that is the spirit in which we too should read it.[45]

The narrative, briefly told by Plutarch, is roughly as follows:[46] There were two pairs of divinities, all of them children of Rhea-Nut (the celestial great mother), who symbolise the opposing principles of Good and Evil. The first couple was composed of Osiris and his sister-wife

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authentic religion of primitive man, see G.R. Boys-Stones, *Post-hellenistic Philosophy: A Study of its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford 2001) 3–59; 99–122.

[43] I am thinking here of a point made by Hopkins 1999, 4: "In the Roman world stories, not analysis, were the stuff of religious persuasion".

[44] On the other hand, Griffiths also claims that Plutarch's speculations are foreign to the realities of the contemporary cult of Isis in Greece: "Only a very cultured élite, one can imagine, would have thought like this, and they would have been nurtured in Neo-Platonism before being converted to Isis and Osiris" (1970, 74). The reasons adduced relate solely to items of factual information, but there is nothing to hinder us from thinking that Plutarch's 'theological' concerns were shared by leaders of the cult, for example, the Isiac priestess Klea, to whom the treatise is dedicated (35, 364e). She is usually identified (admittedly only on account of the homonymity) with the Flavia Klea who appears on a couple of contemporary inscriptions from Delphi (Griffiths 1970, 17; Froidefond 1988, 19ff.).

[45] See however the remarks of Richter 2001.

[46] I mainly follow Plutarch here, incorporating relevant details from Diodorus Siculus, together with some explanatory comments. One should constantly bear in mind Griffiths' very full commentary, already mentioned (Griffiths 1970), as well as its predecessor, Hopfner, 1940–41, the first volume of which is devoted to a commentary on the myth, with the Greek text of chap. 12–20 and a translation into German, while the second is devoted to the rest of work, albeit without a Greek text. Froidefond 1988 is also useful.

Isis, who fell in love even before they were born and secretly mated in the darkness of the womb. This must be an allusion to heterosexual endogamy inserted later as a mythical legitimation of brother-sister marriage in the Pharaonic world, as Diodorus points out (1.27.1).[47] The other pair consisted of the evil Seth, translated into Greek as Typhon, and his sister-wife Nephthys, who are also the siblings of the good pair—four siblings, therefore, all of whom turn out to have sexual relations.[48] Osiris, the lord of all things, reigned wisely in Egypt. He taught the Egyptians agriculture, gave them laws and instructed them in the worship of the gods. He then decided that he ought to set out on a mission to civilise the rest of the world by means of friendly persuasion. His honeyed words, accompanied by music and song, enabled him to manage the task more or less without violence, so that the Greeks identified him with Dionysus.[49] Isis is in turn identified with Demeter (Diod. Sic. 1.25.1; 96.5), so that Plutarch's treatise is in good part a justification of the kinship between the Egyptian and the Eleusinian mysteries.[50]

During his absence, Isis ruled as regent in his stead (cf. Diod. Sic. 1.17.3). On his return however Seth organised a conspiracy in which he was joined by seventy-two others. In order to get rid of his brother, he devised the following ruse. Having secretly measured Osiris up, he had the most beautiful sarcophagus imaginable constructed. He then invited his fellow-conspirators to a feast on 17th Athyr (13th November). Osiris too was to be there. As the feast took its merry way, Seth had his creation brought in. The guests fell silent with wonder, and Seth took advantage of the situation to offer it as a gift to anyone present who fitted it exactly. One after another the guests tried it out until it

[47] It is not certain that the practice existed during the Pharaonic period outside the limits of the royal house: J. Cerny, Consangineous Marriages in Pharaonic Egypt, *JEA* 40 (1954) 23–29. In the Graeco-Roman period it became a general practice: H.I. Bell, Brother and Sister Marriage in Graeco-Roman Egypt, *RIDA* 2 (1949) 83–92; Griffiths 1970, 308f.; S.L. Ager, Familiarity Breeds: Incest and the Ptolemaic Dynasty, *JHS* 125 (2005) 1–34.

[48] On Nephthys, the youngest of the four children of Geb and Nut, see briefly Bonnet 1952, s.v.

[49] Cf. Hdt. 2.42; 144; 156, though he says that the identification was due to the Egyptians; Diod. Sic.1.14–18 ascribes Osiris a role in Dionysus' adventures.

[50] Griffiths notes (1970, 309) that the passage devoted to Osiris' civilising mission is paralleled in Diod. Sic. 1.14., cf. also Froidefond 1988: 68ff. The common source may have been Hecataeus of Abdera. The material is presented in his own distinctively unreliable manner by Merkelbach 1995, 37–55.

came to the turn of Osiris, as naive as he was good. All unsuspecting, the king stretched himself out in the sarcophagus; at that moment the conspirators sprang the trap, clapped on the lid and sealed it with lead. Thus perished Osiris, a miserable end. To avoid possible trouble and the better to attain his further ends, Seth shoved the sarcophagus into the Nile. Bobbing on the waves, it was carried down to the river's Tanaitic mouth in the Delta, which as a result is named 'Accursed'. The box then floated out to sea until it was trapped beneath an 'erica-tree' in the Phoenician city of Byblos, far up the Levantine coast.[51]

Bearing in mind that this myth was standardised, at least to an extent, already in the third millennium, it has been suggested that this odd ending might be an allusion to the relations between Byblos and Egypt at that time, encouraged as they were by the natural currents of the region, which flow up the Syrian coast in an anti-clockwise direction.[52] No Egyptian source however mentions the role of Byblos in connection with the discovery of the sarcophagus—Plutarch is actually the earliest evidence for it. There could be various reasons for the box's turning up at Byblos, for example to account for the celebration of Egyptian cult there (attested for Osiris at least since the New Kingdom, and for Isis from the seventh century BC), or perhaps the assimilation of Osiris and Adonis.[53]

When Isis heard the news, she cut off a lock of hair and dressed herself in mourning. Feverishly but in vain she hunted for her husband: no one knew his whereabouts, save some children who showed her the direction that had been taken by the sarcophagus. That is the reason why the Egyptians believe that children have prophetic powers, especially when they shout their heads off while playing in sacred areas—schools were often attached to temples (cf. Griffiths 1970, 315). In the mean-

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[51] ἐρείκη means 'heather', but the implausibility of this has led to various alternative suggestions, including 'cedar'and 'tamarisk', on the assumption that it is a mistranslation of some Egyptian or Semitic word.

[52] Cf. P. Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte* (Paris 1928) 271, citing documentation from the IV Dynasty onwards; J. Pirenne, *Histoire de la civilisation de l'Égypte ancienne* (Paris 1961) 54ff.; more attention to the archaeology in I.E.S. Edwards, The early Dynastic period in Egypt, *CAH*² 1.2 (1985) 45ff. M. Silver, The Mythical Conflict between Osiris and Seth, and Egypt's Trade with Byblos during the Old Kingdom, in idem (ed.), *Ancient Economy in Mythology: East and West* (Savage, MD 1991) 193–215 defends the story's historicity, ignoring the competing traditions. In his view, the key is not funerary symbolism but trading-links: each of the gods represents a vector in the commercial relations between Egypt and Phoenicia.

[53] On Osiris and Adonis, see the careful discussion by Lightfoot 2003, 305–28.

time, Isis learned that her beloved Osiris had enjoyed the favours of Nephthys, mistaking his sister/sister-in-law for his sister/wife. She also learned that the child that resulted from this case of mistaken identity had been abandoned by his mother immediately after the birth, for fear of Seth/Typhon. All this is mentioned in a digression that has no connection with Plutarch's narrative at this point, which has led some to suppose that Seth's act, unmotivated except by his general wickedness, was really in revenge for Nephthys' adultery with Osiris.[54] In this connection, however, we cannot ignore the *Songs of Isis and Nephthys*, scraps of which are found in several different papyri: they refer unmistakably to the adultery and imply that it was actually an affair. In other words, Plutarch, moralist that he is, has deliberately suppressed it; Diodorus, earlier, implies knowledge of the story in stressing that Isis swore never to have carnal relations with another man after the death of Osiris: μηδενὸς ἀνδρός, with no other man—but says nothing of capricious gods (1.22.1, repeated at 27.1). At any rate, after a great deal of effort and with the aid of some dogs, Isis eventually tracks down her stepson and twice-over nephew, the divine Anubis, who thereupon becomes her most faithful and discreet guardian and accompanies her on her subsequent adventures (Diod. Sic. 1.87.2–3).

The children's information proved to be correct, and so Isis set out for Byblos. Once there, she managed to find Osiris thanks to her knowledge of magic. The coffin had become trapped inside the base of the 'erica-tree', which had shot up with extraordinary rapidity; this miraculous growth had attracted the attention of the king, who arranged for the lower section of the trunk, including the part enclosing the coffin, to be installed in his palace as a pillar to support the roof. Isis managed to gain entry to the palace, and was asked by the queen to wet-nurse her baby, the second of two boys. She did so, using for the task not her nipple, but a finger.[55] Deciding to render the young prince immortal

[54] So Hopfner 1940–1, 1: 46, rejected by Griffiths 1970, 316f. Both authors refer to the papyrological evidence for Nephthys pleading with Horus to open the door so that she can come in to his father; or 'taking care of her brother'; that Osiris was in love with (Sene)nephthys; and for Isis complaining to her father Thoth that Nephthys has slept with Osiris—all of them aspects of this edifying divine cacophony.

[55] It has been claimed that this is an allusion to a rite of adoption, of a type attested in Ethiopia in the 1860s; but, as Griffiths 1970, 327 points out, there is no ancient evidence for it. The gesture of Harpocrates, in putting his finger to his mouth, has no connection with this mythic detail. If anything, it may have been a sign requesting adoption.

by off burning his mortal parts, she put him into the fire, and, turning herself into a swallow—both in Egypt and in Greece an emblem of mourning (Griffiths 1970, 328f.)—flew, twittering with grief, round and round the pillar that concealed the remains of Osiris. This process evidently took some time. One night the queen saw her, and screamed in alarm, thus depriving the child of immortality and forcing Isis to reveal herself.[56] At that, the goddess demanded the coffin, cut it out of the tree-pillar and threw herself over it with cries of such penetrating grief that the baby prince was unable to bear it and expired.

Distracted by sorrow, Isis set sail for Egypt with the sarcophagus. In the Delta marsh, at Buto, she met her son Horus/Harsiêsis. This Horus is neither the one Plutarch mentions at the beginning as the brother of Osiris and Isis, nor the one who is going to appear in the form of Harpocrates ('Horus-the-child'). This fact, emphasised by all the commentators, is highly relevant to Pharaonic theology, for it alludes to the new Pharaoh;[57] but it does cause problems of interpretation in connection with the combat with Seth and Horus' extraordinary violence against Isis, as we shall see.

Isis resolved to hide the sarcophagus, but unfortunately Seth stumbled upon it one night while out hunting. In a fury he removed the body and ripped it into fourteen parts, which he proceeded to scatter about over the entire country.[58] Isis then began a sad tour up the Nile, protected by the crocodiles, in order to locate the pieces of her dismembered brother-husband. One by one she discovered them and gave them burial, either, as one version has it, where she found them, or by having statues of Osiris made out of aromatic wax and establishing a defunctive cult at each site, in order to prevent Seth from discovering which tomb was the real one, and to ensure that the cult became as widely diffused as possible.[59]

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[56] The relation between this part of the myth and the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* esp. 169–255 has been noted by S. Herrmann, Isis in Byblos, *ZÄS* 82 (1957) 48–55.

[57] The deceased Pharaoh is Osiris, the new one is identified with Horus, cf. Griffiths 1970, 337f.; Froidefond 1988, 269 n. 7; Merkelbach 1995, 87–93. Griffiths however rightly observes, "Harpocrates…is not easy to distinguish from Harsiêsis save in that he is consistently depicted as a child" (p. 353).

[58] The number 13 might have to do with the number of nomes, the territorial and administrative units of Egypt. But different versions offer different numbers: Diodorus 1.21.2, for example gives 26; in the Osiris temple at Dendera, during the Ptolemaic period, we find 16 in one text, 14 in another; at Edfu, we find the total of 42; cf. Griffiths 1970, 338.

[59] Diod. Sic. 1.21.5–11; Strabo 17.1.23, 803C; cf. Seneca, *de superstitione* ap. Serv. *ad Aen.* 6.154.

The only part she could not find was the penis (Diod. Sic.1.21.5), because Seth had tossed it into the Nile and it had been gobbled up by some fish.[60] So she made a replica, and set it up for worship, which continued down to Plutarch's day. At the same time, the tradition that Harpocrates was conceived after Osiris' death shows that the severed penis, for all that it had been eaten, continued in some sense to exist and retain its virility (cf. Casadio 2003, 256–58). The injunction against eating certain kinds of long, thin fish might be related to their resemblance to a phallus, but the idea is not very persuasive, since the prohibition only applied to specific fish in certain areas of Egypt. On the other hand, the fact that the only part of Osiris that almighty Isis failed to recover is the naughty tool seems, in the extant accounts, to have nothing to do with the adultery. To be sure, in ordinary life in Egypt, adultery seems to have been severely sanctioned: according to a story in *P.Westcar*, an adulterous woman was burned and her ashes thrown into the Nile (Griffiths 1970, 317). It is however far from clear whether this fact (the story applies to the woman, not the man) is relevant to the interpretation of a foundation-myth of the type we are dealing with. Since the ancient texts do not make an explicit connection between the adultery of Osiris and Nephthys and the loss of the penis, we cannot know whether the followers of Isis made one.[61] But an irreverent joke of this kind during the singing of the songs that recalled the famous adultery and the fate of the tool of divine bliss would not be implausible. A quick mind prefers humour to its moralising opposite: the fate of Osiris' penis might have been found amusing since everyone knew that he had been unfaithful to Isis, for all that the connection is not made explicit. Whatever the truth here, the primary connotation of the penis acquiring a life of its own and being able to engender Harpocrates is its miraculous power of fecundation, that far surpasses ordinary human understanding. In this context, Osiris is 'the mummy with the long phallus' (Griffiths 1970, 343f.).[62]

[60] According to Plutarch, this is the reason why the *lepidotos*, the *phagros* and the *oxyrhynchos* were not eaten (*De Iside* 18, 358b).

[61] Several ancient texts would legitimate the term 'Isiacs' to denote the followers of Isis, e.g. Valerius Maximus 7.3.8; Suetonius, *Dom.* 1.2; *ILS* 1260 (Fabia Aconia Paulina, wife of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus); 4369, 6419f; 6420b. [Alvar here uses the substantive 'isíacos' (plur.), which is plausible in Spanish, but appears uncouth in English. I have continued to use the usual periphrasis 'followers of Isis'. Tr.]

[62] Note also Diod. Sic 1.22.6–7. Burton 1972, 96f. observes that in Egypt there is little narrative trace of the loss of Osiris' phallus, and no marked cult of it except at Mendes.

Thanks to her untiring efforts, Isis succeeded in gathering together the dismembered remains of her brother-husband. This sorrowful progress came to be the focus of the *inventio Osiridis*, the ritual celebrating the miraculous discovery of the fragments of Osiris' body with the aid of the faithful Anubis. Quest and discovery were the essential preliminaries to the recomposition of the corpse, which was thus able to return to life, or rather to bestow new life, in the sense that Isis could have intercourse with the inert corpse and thus become pregnant.[63] The symbolic meaning here is clear enough: salvation in the cult of Isis is only possible on the basis of the individual's voluntary search for truth, and—more important still—of the goddess' divine aid, which, thanks to her magical and medicinal arts, makes resurrection and immortality possible (Diod. Sic. 1.25.2–7). Obviously this is not a resurrection that reverses the rules of the real world.[64] Once dead, Osiris could not be restored to his social existence, however greatly his kin might wish it, since that has gone for good (this is one of the difficulties posed for the *imaginaire* by any attempt somehow to preserve the dead in a stronger form than mere memory). One way of reducing the problem is to create a fictional world, of the living dead able to communicate through the mind; yet, although at first sight such a solution appears to offer relief, ultimately it only makes the already burdensome world of mortals still more fraught. The fantasy of meeting again in an agreeable world beyond this one does provide a sort of consolation, but at the same time it crams this one full of ghosts.

Religion loves to play with inconsistencies. Although Osiris has descended to the one fitting place, the Underworld, myth is allowed to contradict itself. For Osiris returns from there in order to complete

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[63] Cf. Frankfort 1948, 40 and 356 fig. 18; Griffiths 1970, 343; at 353 he cites *P.Louvre* 3079, where the goddess says, "I have played the part of a man though I am a woman, in order to wake thy (Osiris') name since thy divine seed was in my body". This seems to mean that in bringing about Osiris' revival she played both the male and female part in the sexual act. It is even possible that the posthumous conception of Horus is alluded to in the Pyramid Texts (632a–d): "Thy sister Isis has come to thee, joyous through love of thee. She places for thee thy phallus on her vulva. Thy seed comes forth into her, so that she is equipped as Sothis". Griffiths however points out that the allusion to Sothis = Sirius proves the astral character of the text, Osiris being Orion (1970, 353 n. 6); cf. G. Clerc, Isis-Sothis dans le monde romain, in de Boer and Edridge 1978, 1: 247–81.

[64] Diodorus however explicitly says that Isis managed to bring her son Horus (= Harsiêsis) back to life and made him immortal (1.25.6 with Burton 1972, 109; cf. *POxy* 1380 l.246ff.).

a task that has hitherto scarcely been mentioned, the completion of the education of his son Horus/Harsiêsis, whom Isis met in the Delta on her return from Byblos.[65] The dead king does not seem to able to rest so long as justice does not prevail on earth: Horus appears not so much the avenger of his father as his helper or supporter.[66] At any rate, Osiris comes to Horus to train him to become a fine warrior; since it is not possible fully to restore the social relations of the dead, Isis is not mentioned.[67] However Horus has now clearly taken over responsibility for the family. He is the young man who guarantees continuity (as represented by the existence of three distinct Horuses), whose responsibility is to enable his parents to enjoy peace by confronting Seth.[68] This evident emphasis on the values of the family, as a structure where the basic rules of life-sharing and continuity through time are lived out, gives us a good insight into the values that underlie the Roman cult of Isis. At the same time, values such as these are not limited to the family and can become a political programme: Horus is at the same time the living Pharaoh, whose right to the throne has been challenged by Seth, acting to all appearances like a typical uncle. The Ennead, the council of nine gods, manages to resolve the complex conflict, now involving the issue of order at three different levels, of the dead, of the dynasty, and of the cosmos, as well as that of good versus evil. We might add that the social, ethical and political implications of such questions were of the greatest interest in the High Empire, when the myth was being reformulated in this manner.

Overcoming evil requires violence—lots of it. Day after day Horus and Seth, in the form of hippopotami, fight titanic battles, causing a tremendous amount of damage. The heavens tremble, and the gods in alarm decide, in one version of the myth, to separate the contenders by creating a no-man's-land between them. In the end Horus manages to overcome Seth and put him out of action.[69] But then Isis feels pity

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[65] That the Horus of chap. 19 is Harsiêsis is made clear by the mention right at the end of Isis' giving birth to Harpocrates (358d9–e1).

[66] So rightly Griffiths 1970, 344f. on *De Iside* 19, 358b10f.

[67] She is however found helping Horus towards victory in Diod. Sic. 1.88.6, but the allusion is too brief to justify withdrawing the claim in the text.

[68] Even the Egyptian sources sometimes get muddled up over the three Horuses, as is clear from the 'Contendings of Horus and Seth' in *P.Chester Beatty* no. 1 (Middle Kingdom): Lefebvre 1949, 195 n. 72.

[69] The most complete narrative is to be found in the 'Contendings' (see previous note) in Gardiner 1931, of which there is an expurgated French translation in Lefebvre's collection. *P.Sallier* IV however also contains a good deal of information.

on seeing her brother Seth bound in chains, and sets him free. Such female weakness, even on the part of a goddess, his own mother, infuriates Horus, who has been badly knocked up in the struggle (as we learn from the Egyptian texts; Plutarch says nothing about it), and he attacks her, in one version, including Plutarch's, tearing off her crown, in another, lopping off her head with his 16lb chopper. In the versions in which she is decapitated, Thoth/Hermes provides her with the head of a cow (i.e. Hathor, who was the mother of yet another form of Horus), which is the basis of her usual identification with Io, daughter of Inachus, in Latin poetry.[70]

Horus' fury, which has sometimes been interpreted as a response to his own probable illegitimacy, was prompted rather by Isis' soft-heartedness towards Seth during the battle: according to one version, Horus was infuriated by the fact that Isis, having stuck a barb into Seth, took it out again when he begged her to do so (Griffiths 1970, 349f.). Seeking to explain their enmity, Plutarch claims indeed that Seth prosecuted Horus before the gods on a charge of being illegitimate, though there is no support for this in Egyptian sources (Griffiths 1970, 351f.). The motif of fury allows Plutarch to suppress any allusion to the homosexual relation between Seth and Horus,[71] the castration and dismemberment of Seth, the amputation of Horus' hands and his seduction by Isis, all of them constituent elements of the myth in its local variants, that run through the various possible patterns of sexual relations which are the gods' prerogative even as they destabilise the order of the cosmos.[72]

However I do not think it has been sufficiently stressed that Horus' disapproval might be related to the danger implicit in his mother's new pregnancy. In political terms, it is his succession to the throne that is in jeopardy, since Isis is carrying in her womb a potential new Pharaoh; socially, however, it is doubtful, as some Egyptian sources put it, whether the wife could have become pregnant by her husband once he was

[70] See the references in T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth* (Baltimore and London 1993) 198–204.

[71] See *P.Chester Beatty* II 1–12, recorded also in a text of the XII Dynasty: Lefebvre 1949, 180; see further Griffiths 1960; W. Barta, Zur Reziprozität der Homosexuellen zwischen Horus und Seth, *Göttinger Miszellen* 129 (1992) 33–38; Montserrat 1996, 142f. On Plutarch's intentions in suppressing 'barbaric' details, cf. briefly Richter 2001, 207.

[72] The struggle between Horus and Seth is primarily for sovereignty over Egypt; in some versions, once defeated, Seth is treated honourably by Horus, in others he is expelled and/or mutilated (Griffith 1970, 349).

dead.[73] If her behaviour had been improper, Horus, as king, would be obliged to punish his mother's indiscretion, by bringing about her death or the loss of her crown, which are symbolic equivalents. The disagreements between the traditions that claim that Isis is supreme and those that promote Horus reproduce the theological and territorial conflicts that are so characteristic of Egyptian history, and naturally re-appear, complete with their irreconcilable features, in the mythical discourse that was re-elaborated in the Hellenistic-Roman period. Religion however can project these contradictions onto a more profoundly symbolic world beyond, and allegorical readings extracted from them so as to keep the faithful lulled in the opacities of the incomprehensible, subject to the order postulated by the unfathomable mysteries of religion.

Though he himself lost both his testicles in the battle,[74] Seth tore out one of Horus' eyes; once out, it set off to voyage up through the heavens, and became the sun's disc. This is the key to understanding one of the meanings of the myth. Horus is the sun itself, whose triumph overcomes chaos and creates the order of the annual cycle that allows human-beings to know in advance what is to occur at each season of the year. Isis is another astral symbol, the moon.[75] The myth's remaining personifications represent a succession of other planets or explanations of the succession of the seasons. There can be no doubt that this is a mythical account of the cycle of the year and of the relationships between certain stars. That is, cosmic order returns after the chaotic conflict with the triumph of Horus, who represents the living Pharaoh, the son of Osiris; the latter is the dead Pharaoh and the god of the underworld, thus linking him with a specific form of fertility.

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[73] Claimed both by *P.Chester Beatty* I and *P.Sallier* IV.

[74] Gardiner 1931, 20 no. 5 and 21 no. 1, cf. Griffiths 1960, 29. In this version, Seth tears out both of Horus' eyes, which turn into bulbs from which lotus-plants emerge.

[75] This is explicitly stated by a controversial passage of Diodorus, 1.11.1, where he says that Isis is the moon and Osiris the sun. Etymologically this is indefensible, and the doubt has then spread to the claim that Osiris was a solar divinity. I think that those who reject this evidence are right, but that Diodorus' 'nonsense' can be minimised by assuming that the heavenly bodies he refers to, the sun and the moon, are not the dead Pharaoh Osiris and Isis, but the former's living son, Horus, and Isis. The complexity of the family-relationships in the myth may have contributed to Diodorus' (or rather his source's) 'mistake'. In my view this is the least violent means of resolving the difficulties presented by the passage.

Osiris' role as a divinity connected with growing things associates him in particular with grain.[76] At the level of explicit narrative, it is he who introduces agriculture to Egypt; but the myth also replicates the annual vegetative cycle by representing Osiris as a god who gives life after a transitional period: he lives under the earth for a period of time and there germinates the seed that will give new life.[77] The myth's proleptic rehearsal of the sequence required for successful agricultural production renders the mystery of life intelligible. On the other hand, one may also hold water to be the ultimate cause of the regeneration of nature; Osiris plays a role here too, being present in the liturgy through the *hydria*, which contains the token Nile-water, identified with Osiris.[78]

The myth thus reproduces the biological cycle, whose basis is the family. The family is indeed the elementary form of all social relations. If it holds together, any problem, however serious, can be surmounted; conversely, any act that violates that bond may provoke incalculable disasters. This is the second basic level of reading myth: as an expla-

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[76] Cf. Athenagoras, *Legatio/Apologia* 22.9: 'Osiris is the sowing of the wheat', naturally emphasised by Frazer 1914, 2: 30–48, and esp. 96–114; Hopfner 1940–41, 2: 250–54; Frankfort 1948, 185–90; J.G. Griffiths, *The Origins of Osiris and his Cult*, Numen Supplement 40 (Leyden 1980) 163–70; Hani 1976, 155–58. However Griffiths has solid arguments to show that the agrarian character of Osiris cannot be of very great antiquity, since he does not seem to be associated with barley until the Middle Kingdom (cf. the *Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus* 29–33 [ed. K. Sethe, *Dramatische Texte zu altägyptischen Mysterienspielen*, Leipzig 1928]). Indeed, it has been said that vegetation is a *Nebensache* as far as he is concerned (Mettinger 2001, 169f.). The original reason for the linkage seems to be the Egyptian calendar's correlation with the annual flooding of the Nile, which is to be connected with Osiris' resurrection: cf. Plutarch, *De Iside* 39, 372c with Bonneau 1964, 245–48. The gradual slippage of the calendar meant that the festival ended up coinciding with the Nile subsidence, the moment when things began to grow, so that the resurrection came to be linked to the growing-cycle (see also Chap. 4.4.a below). Isis is obviously also associated with plant-growth, since some traditions claim that her tears were the cause of the Nile flood. A more direct link to the agrarian sphere is however her identification with the serpent Renenutet, better known as Thermouthis: *P.Jumilhac* 23.13 says that Isis turned into an uraeus (cobra), her sacred animal (Aelian, *de nat. anim.* 10.31; Apuleius, Met. 11.3; cf. Ovid, *Am.* 2.13.13; *Met.* 9. 694 with Bömer ad loc.; Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.538 with Friedländer ad loc.). Isis-Thermouthis is not attested before the Ptolemaic period, though she may have been created as early as the New Kingdom, cf. G. Deschènes, Isis Thermouthis: à propos d'une statuette dans la collection du prof. M.J. Vermaseren, in de Boer and Edridge 1978, 1: 305–15; Malaise 1985, 125–55. A selection of images in *Mostra Iside* 232f. nos. IV.228–30.

[77] Mettinger reproduces a bas-relief from the roof-temple at Philae, which shows the corn-ears sprouting out of his corpse, and being watered by a farmer (2001, 171 fig. 6.1).

[78] Plutarch, *De Iside* 32, 363d; Griffiths 1970, 420f. collects various Egyptian texts that identify Osiris with the Nile-god; see further Chap. 4.4.b.i below.

nation of how the world functions; or rather, as a justification of the established order of things. Because myths are stories that offer examples of normative social behaviour, they contain an implicit system of values or standards. Although Horus and Osiris represent the continuity of the power of the Pharaoh, the reading of the myth in the Principate focused more on relationships of inter-personal power (though political relationships are not entirely absent). Her repeated flirtations with the imperial cult notwithstanding, Isis' dominant position shifts the emphasis onto the domestic side of things. The main image is of Isis sustaining the order of this world, controlling the realm of social relations where her power is particularly manifest. It is because Isis is assigned this function in myth that both Plutarch and Diodorus stress her virtues as a wife.

The well-known self-predication of Isis from the temple of Isis and Serapis at Cyrene, a metrical text dating from AD 103, illustrates how her adherents managed to integrate all the praiseworthy features that I have mentioned so far:

> I, Isis, am sole ruler of time, inspector of the limits of the sea and the land, and, with sceptre in hand, their sole inspector. All name me supreme Goddess, the greatest of all the gods in heaven. For I myself have discovered everything, all is my work: the writing on the seals shows it clearly, revealing to all the inventions I have vouchsafed to mortals, and the fruits of the soil. I have fortified cities with reverend walls, and to mortals I have shown how to understand (such skills) clearly. Without me nothing has come into existence, and the stars do not hold their courses without first receiving my instructions…[79]

Finally, when she has re-ordered the cosmos and regulated social relationships in the world, all that is missing is control over life beyond the grave. The transition between the sensible world and the Underworld is in the hands of Anubis, the bastard son of Osiris, who, in his role as psychopomp, leads mortal souls into the presence of his father, the god of the realm of everlasting gloom. A text not often cited in this context clearly distinguishes between two levels of the gods' activity in a manner suggesting that they were conceptually distinct. In his treatise on the interpretation of dreams, Artemidorus distinguishes between the physical teaching of the Egyptian gods and the mythical (*Oneirocrit.* 2. 39).

[79] *SEG* 9: 192 = Totti no. 4 = *RICIS* 701/0103, cf. E. Des Places, *La religion grecque* (Paris 1969) 164f.

Unfortunately this is not very specific, but he implies that the cult celebrated grief, and, as a result, the appearance in a dream of Isis, Serapis, Anubis or Harpocrates foretells threats and danger. We may suggest that, since when we are awake they instead afford salvation from evils, Artemidorus' 'physical teaching' is the opposite of pain and the suffering it entails.[80]

In any case, we have seen how a solution is provided in mythical terms for the troubles that reality and imagination bring upon human-beings. Evil is given a basis and a certain number of motives. Once it gains a hold, it subverts all forms of order, but the ancient notion of Ma'at (cosmic harmony) can be restored thanks to the sufferings of the divine family that for human communities symbolises perfection not merely while they are here on earth but also, especially in the Roman period, in fearful eternity.

ii. *Serapis*[81]

Alexander's conquest of Egypt initiated a process of culture-contact between Greeks and Egyptians, spanning a continuum between mere co-existence (the incidence of bilingualism was quite limited) and habitual or regular assimilation of cultural practices. At the socio-economic level, the co-existence turned into what was clearly an oppression, from which the sole escape was a form of local oligarchy. This created serious political problems, which were palliated by a variety of means, including the encouragement of a hybrid culture focused on the new city of Alexandria. As a new foundation, Alexandria stood in need of a tutelary deity. It was desirable that such a deity should incorporate elements of Egyptian tradition in order to fit in with the local gods, but also possess Greek traits so as not to appear odd to the new colonists; the aim was that they should accept him as their own deity. The new god had to be as acceptable in Alexandria as in the surrounding

[80] A little further on, however, he says much the same about Cybele. On divine intervention in the structure of dreams and its relation to salvation in the mysteries, see Hidalgo 1992.

[81] The proper form of the god's name has been the subject of much controversy; a whole range of different etymologies has been proposed starting with the speculations of ancient authors, cf. Dunand 1973, 1: 51ff.; G. Mussies, Some Notes on the Name of Sarapis, in de Boer and Edridge 1978, 821–32. I use the later form Serapis, since it is the one most commonly found in Latin epigraphy; although Sarapis is usual in Greek, Serapis also occurs there.

territory (*chora*).[82] All this explains the new régime's decision to act rapidly, for there can be little doubt that it was Ptolemy I Soter who first established the cult. The King is supposed to have received the command in a dream (Plutarch, *De Iside* 28, 362a). The later tradition produced a fine array of etymologies to account for the name. It was claimed that Ptolemy took delivery of a statue of Pluto from the city of Sinope, since this was the god who may have appeared to him in a dream and bade him seek him out.[83] After the transfer to Alexandria, the statue was given the name Serapis, supposedly the Egyptian name for Pluto. This identification is repeated in all the contemporary sources that mention the new god (Dunand 1973, 1: 46f.).

There were a number of quite different versions of Serapis' origins.[84] Few nowadays credit the story that the friends of Alexander had consulted the god in his temple in Babylonia when the King was dying.[85] It has been suggested that this was some kind of oracular Baal subsequently identified with Serapis. By this account, Serapis might have been taken to Sinope from Babylonia, and thence to Alexandria. Most scholars however have tried to solve the problem by distinguishing between the introduction of the god's statue at the end of the fourth century BC and the 'creation' of a new cult, most likely in the reign of Ptolemy II.[86] It seems clear that there were at least two, perhaps several, quite different accounts which have become indissolubly fused, so that there can be no final clarity.

There is little sense to be made of the claim that a statue of Pluto was brought from Sinope to Alexandria in the late fourth century BC,

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[82] Vidman 1970, 45 (this section provides an excellent account of the historical context of the creation of Serapis). The view that the cult was created with a view to bringing Greeks and Egyptians together was argued already by P. Jouguet, La politique intérieure du 1er Ptolémée, *BIFAO* 30 (1930) 513–36. Whether it succeeded is of course another question. It has been argued, for example, that the Serapeum mentioned by Zenon in his letter to the *dioiketes* Apollonios (*SB* III 6713, 257 BC) is one that was to be built in the Greek quarter of Memphis, to serve the Greek population exclusively: K.J. Rigsby, Founding a Serapeum, *GRBS* 42 (2001) 117–24.

[83] Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 4. 48.2 Stählin, p. 74.5f. Marcovich = Sanzi 2003, 80f. no. 7, says that it was Ptolemy II Philadelphus, not Soter; Tacitus, *Hist.* 4. 83f. seems already to reflect sources that claimed the cult was founded by Ptolemy III. Eusebius' account is muddled. The convoluted state of the tradition makes it impossible to be absolutely confident; for a recent account, see Scheer 2000, 260–66.

[84] Fraser 1972, 246–76 offers in my view the best, most balanced synthesis of the whole tangled topic; also Stambaugh 1972. On the iconography, Hornbostel 1973 is dreadfully long-winded; Clerc and Leclant 1994 much to be preferred.

[85] Plutarch, *Alex.* 76.9, 706f; Arrian, *Anab.* 7.26.2.

[86] E.g. Stambaugh 1972, 6–13; Dunand 1973, 1: 48.

and that thirty years later a new cult developed around it. It is surely more plausible to think that various syncretistic pressures, both native-Egyptian and Graeco-Egyptian, put their stamp on the new god, who, perhaps originally conceived already by Alexander, was then read through the prism of various other deities that seemed to possess analogous features. Though he was marginal among Alexander's gods, Serapis became important once Egypt came to be ruled by a Macedonian king. Quite apart from the other aspects of his identity, the new god obviously needed an appropriate face and bearing, that is, a cult-image. Of course the dates offered by the literary tradition do not fit with such a scenario, but in my view that is not a serious objection, since everyone accepts that the information it provides is unreliable.

The most plausible explanation for the disagreements in the sources is that all three of the early Ptolemies played a part in the institutionalisation of the cult. Since the discovery by Alan Rowe in 1941–2 of the hieroglyphic and Greek foundation plaques of the Ptolemaic enclosure on Rhacotis, there can be no question that it was built in the third quarter of the third century BC by Ptolemy III Euergetes.

This enclosure, consisting of a colonnaded court measuring some 220 × 75m, housed a temple of Serapis with a cult-statue, flanked by a contemporary 'Stoa-like Building' whose purpose is unknown (Text fig. 1).[87] It had two semi-monumental entrances from the north-south street R8 on the eastern long-side. These entrances are not placed symmetrically in the outer wall but seem to be aligned in one case directly opposite an earlier 'T-shaped Building', in the other, to provide access to the so-called 'South Building'. The main enclosure is thus firmly dated. But the T-shaped Building and the South Building make clear that some effort at monumentalisation had been undertaken earlier.[88] There is even some epigraphic evidence that points in the same direction. An altar to Ptolemy II and Arsinoe (died 270 BC) was found on an earlier pebble-mosaic floor belonging to a building cleared to make way for the temple of Serapis, and seems to commemorate a chthonic

[87] On the history of the site, and especially the differences between the Ptolemaic building and the Roman replacement (built at some point between the fire of AD 181 and the death of Caracalla in 217), see McKenzie, Gibson and Reyes 2004. The fact that the Stoa-like Building is set back from the building-line of the temple of Serapis, and has a different design, implies a) that it was built later than the T-shaped Building in front, and b) that it was not a temple of Isis.

[88] Both were demolished at the time of the Roman reconstruction, which is why virtually nothing can be said about them except that they existed.

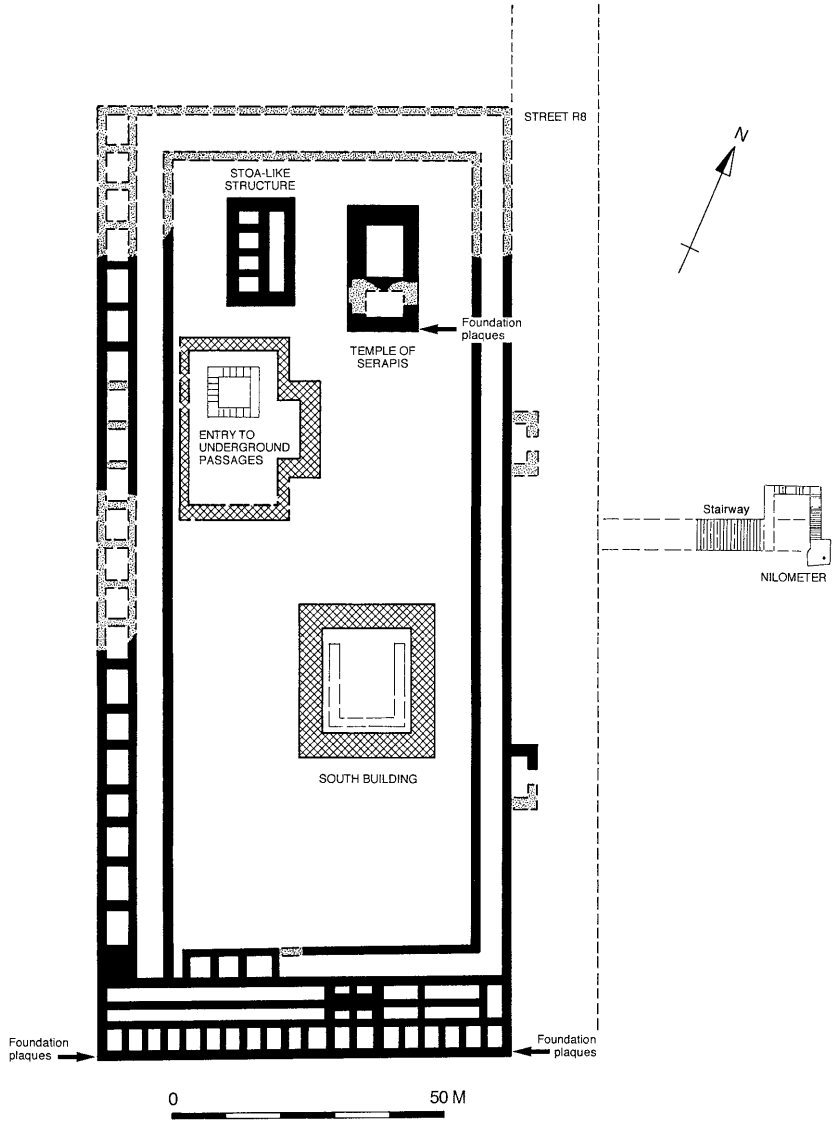

Fig. 1. Plan of the Ptolemaic wall-foundations of the Serapeum-complex at Alexandria.

cult in their honour, probably in association with Serapis. During his excavations, Rowe also found dedications to Isis and Serapis from the reign of Ptolemy I or early in that of his successor.[89] It is thus tempting to believe that these two buildings are all that was retained by Ptolemy III Euergetes of one or more earlier monumentalising phase(s).[90] Of particular interest is the fact that they were linked by an underground tunnel some 60m long and 1m wide cut with great labour into the bare rock, and then lined with brick (Text fig. 2). This may imply, as Judith McKenzie has argued (2004, 83), that the two buildings were contemporary; but it certainly suggests that oracles and a certain degree of priestly prestidigitation were already associated with the cult before the building of the enclosure by Ptolemy III.[91]

Nowadays most scholars argue that the creation of Serapis involved drawing elements from a variety of existing deities whose cult could be exploited for dynastic ends. One suggestion is that, as Clement of Alexandria claimed, he was a fusion of Osiris and Apis, the bull that symbolised fecundity and was worshipped in the famous temple at Memphis.[92] Apis seems to have derived his link with the dead through his association with Osiris in the Saitic period. The god's name would reflect this fusion, Sarapis/Serapis being a syncopation of Osiris + Apis.[93] The link with Osiris also suggested a further association with the Nile, its annual flood, and so the prosperity of Egypt. In other words, Serapis is likely to have been a hellenised version of an Egyptian

[89] Altar on mosaic floor: *OGIS* 725 = Bernard 2001, 34–6 no. 8 (faint, partly effaced); also Grimm 1998, 82 fig. 83; dedications to Isis and Serapis: *SEG* 24: 1166; 1167–8 = Bernand 2001, 19f. no. 2; 27f. no. 4, with Fraser 1972, 2: 385 n. 367.

[90] There are traces of a wall beneath the T-shaped Building (see fig. 2), and running beyond the South Building, which implies still earlier construction, but there is no means of linking it directly to the Serapeum-phase.

[91] The well-known late-antique reports of mechanical apparatus and lighting effects in the temple refer to the Roman Serapeum that was constructed after the fire of AD 181, and it is quite unknown whether they also existed earlier: Rufinus, *Hist. eccl.* 11. 22f. (tr. A.T. Reyes in McKenzie et al. 2004, 106); Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* 7. 15; Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 16. 2–5; Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 22; cf. F. Thelamon, Serapis et le baiser du Soleil, *Antichità Alto Adriatica* 5 (1974) 243.

[92] Clement, *Protrept.* 4.48.6 Stählin, p. 75.29–31 Marcovich.

[93] This was first argued by U. Wilcken, *Urkunde der Ptolemäerzeit, I: Papyri aus Unter-Ägypten* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1904–21) 77–89. In Varro's view the name was a syncopation of *soros*, the Greek word for a sarcophagus, and Apis (ap. Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 18.5). Oserapis is the form found in *SB* I 5103 = *PGrMag* XL (mid-IV^{a}), from the Serapeum in Memphis.

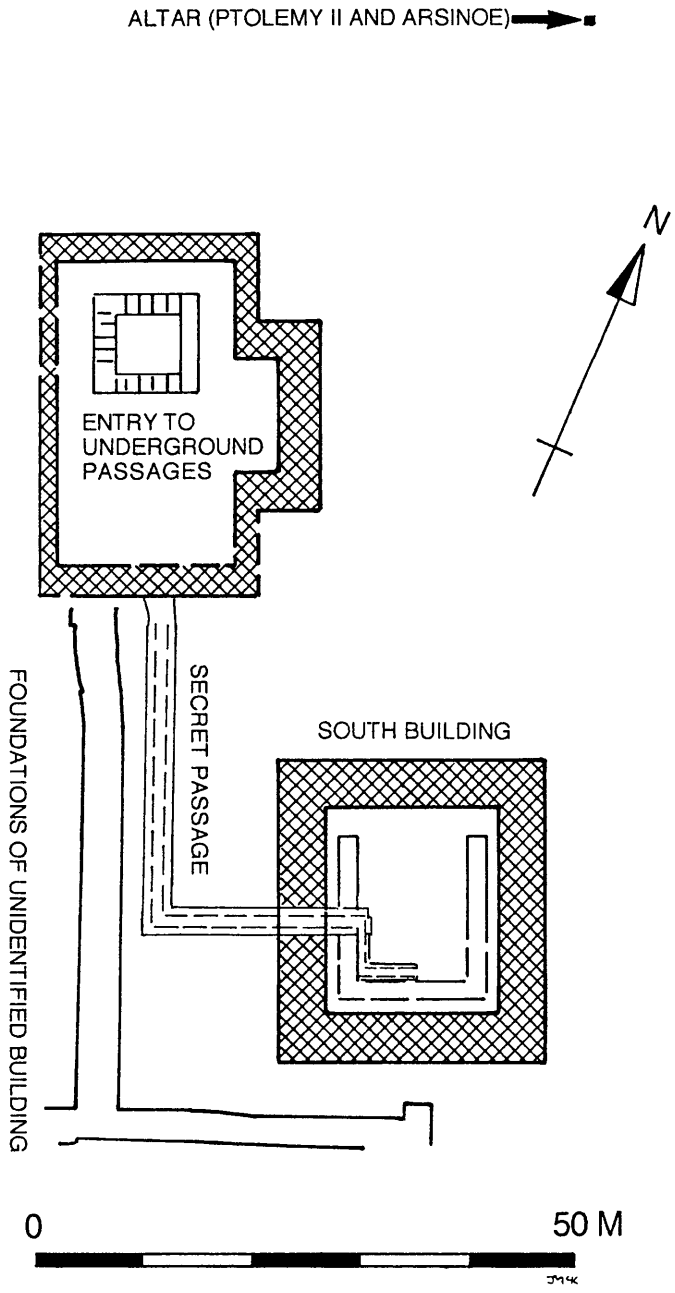

Fig. 2. The site of the Serapeum before the monumentalisation by Ptolemy III Euergetes, showing the tunnel linking the T-shaped Building and the South Building.

god of the dead, whose cult at Memphis was renowned in the period immediately preceding Alexander's conquest.[94]

This re-modelled Egyptian god was then read through an existing Greek deity, Pluto, as was recognised already in the Hellenistic period by Heracleides of Pontus and Archemachus of Euboea, who are cited by Plutarch, *De Iside* 27, 361e. His outward appearance and many of his divine traits were borrowed from the god of the Underworld (Stambaugh 1972, 47ff.). These were the basic ingredients, the ethnic background of each component being taken carefully into account. Features of other deities, such as Dionysus, as a god associated with the Underworld, came to be added in order to round out his identity and functions; in order to create a cult attractive to the Greeks, his worship also incorporated details borrowed from the Eleusinian mysteries.

As the tutelary deity of Alexandria, Serapis took over some of the features of the Agathodaemon, the beneficent daemon in the form of a snake that, according to the legend, had died as a result of the work involved in founding the city (Ps.-Callisthenes 1.32.5–7). In expiation, Alexander put up a temple to the *agathos daimon* and the cult became a popular form of devotion, as is indicated by the quantity of evidence for it found in private houses. It was later taken over as a vehicle for other ideological interests, such as the imperial cult.[95] We cannot pinpoint the precise moment at which these sacred snakes start appearing with the head of Serapis. However the parallel appearance of other snakes with the head of Isis and the minting of coins with the device beginning in the reign of Hadrian suggests that the syncretism between the Agathodaemon and Serapis began at much the same time.[96] This is all the more interesting because, exactly contemporary with Plutarch's *De Iside*, it constitutes documentary evidence for syncretistic processes and their underlying intentionality: certain popular beliefs are instru-

[94] See esp. J.D. Ray, The House of Osarapis, in P.J. Ucko, R. Tringham and G.W. Dimbleby (eds.), *Man, Settlement and Urbanism* (London 1972) 699–702, on the cult at Memphis at the time of Nectanebo I and II, based on the excavations there of the 1960s. The hieroglyphic version of the foundation-plaques of the Ptolemaic temple, found by Alan Rowe, gives Serapis' name as Osiris-Apis: Grimm 1998, 83, figs.84a–b, d, f–g; Bernand 2001, 42f. no. 13, pl. 6.13; cf. R.L. Gordon, s.v. Sarapis, *OCD*[3] 1355f.; Dunand 1973, 1: 50.

[95] F. Dunand, Les représentations de l'Agathodémon à propos de quelques bas-reliefs du Musée d'Alexandrie, *BIFAO* 167 (1967) 37f.; eadem 1981, 277–82; Sfameni Gasparro 1997, 81; 88–90.

[96] M. Pietrzykowski, Sarapis-Agathos Daimon, in de Boer and Edridge 1978, 3: 959–66.

mentalised in order to give expression to new forms of religiosity that directly benefit the politico-ideological interests in control of the society.[97]

Ptolemy's interest in creating a cult acceptable both to the Egyptian and the Greek communities, so as to encourage social cohesion focused upon his own person, implied an effort of religious engineering involving refined managerial techniques (Scheer 2000, 260–6). Our sources imply that this technical knowledge was provided by ingenious theologians at the king's court.[98] On the Egyptian side, there was Manetho, who surely played an important role in translating the regenerative symbolism associated with Osiris into a form appropriate to the character of the new god, who was after all supposed to replace him as the consort of Isis. This involved a certain amount of re-thinking in order to fit him for his new, more suggestive, more polyvalent, role. This task required the services of a specialist in Greek religion, and more particularly someone familiar with the world of the Eleusinian mysteries who was capable of providing the raw materials needed for a successful religious fusion. The sources' claim that Timotheus, a member of the Eumolpid family at Eleusis, was chosen is thus wholly plausible.[99] His contribution must have been to introduce into the cult of the Egyptian god key elements of the Eleusinian mysteries that might at the same time serve to hellenise Isis.[100]

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[97] J. Alvar, Isis y Osiris *daimones* (Plut., *De Iside* 360D), in Alvar, Blánquez and Wagner 1992, 251f.

[98] Plutarch, *De Iside* 28, 362a; Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.83.2 is the only source to mention Timotheus. Welles 1962, 288 n. 83, rightly pointed out that no source actually says that Timotheus and Manetho created the cult of Serapis, as is usually said. However the fact that theologians of the two sides worked together certainly supports the idea that they, or other men of the same calibre, took an active role in the formation of the new cult.

[99] So rightly Burkert 1987, 37; 73; Scheer 2000, 263. Welles' claim to the contrary, that it may be possible to create a cult-statue or a cult, but not a god (1962, 284), is in my view baseless. A mere glance at the religious movements of the Principate is sufficient to show how unreasonable the claim is. Of course the process of construction is complex. But there is always something that provides a distinctive character, so that, at a specific historical moment when social and ideological circumstances have prepared the ground, the new formation becomes acceptable.

[100] Cf. C. Schneider, *Kulturgeschichte des Hellenismus* (Munich, 1967–69) 2, 885f.; Dunand 1973, 1: 66ff.; eadem, Le syncrétisme isiaque à la fin de l'époque hellénistique, in AA.VV., *Le syncrétisme dans les religions grecque et romaine. Colloque de Strasbourg 9–11 juin 1971*. Centre de recherches d'histoire de religions de l'Université des Sciences Humaines de Strasbourg et l'Université de Besançon (Paris 1973) 79–93.

I have already pointed out that, since he was Osiris' replacement, Serapis also possessed the traits of a deity of the Underworld.[101] This link was mediated through the connection established between him and the divinised bull Apis, which was the embodiment of the dead Osiris at Memphis.[102] All this is clearly due to the inspiration of the Egyptian priest Manetho. The god thus united the two cultures in himself. He was a god of the Underworld but also, and to no lesser degree, a god of (oracular) healing. These are the two aspects of his saving power.[103] He regulates things in the world by virtue of his civilising suzerainty, but he also rules the cosmos, just like Zeus, and Egyptian Amun/Ammon.[104] We encounter this role of Serapis repeatedly in inscriptions. An anonymous text in Greek from Quintanilla de Somoza (prov. León) in Tarraconensis, for example, invokes Εἷς Ζεὺς Σ(ωτὴρ?) Σέραπις Ἰαώ, One, Zeus, Serapis (the saviour?), Iao.[105] Through Apis, son of Re, the Sun-god, who is represented as a bull with the solar disk between his horns, he came to be associated with the Sun (Stambaugh 1972, 79–82), thus reduplicating his power of ordering the cosmos. As the heir of Osiris he is a god of fertility, symbolising the agricultural cycle: hence,

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[101] Cf. Tacitus' comparison with Hades-Pluto and Dis pater: *Hist.* 4.83f.

[102] See nn. 92 and 93 above. Osiris continued to exist as an independent deity, though he had to share his religious functions with Serapis: he remained a god of death, ritual and myth, while Serapis became a deity who conveys his orders through dreams and grants the boons desired by those who pray to him. F. Dunand has however pointed out that at the temple of Osiris and Isis of Kysis in the Great Oasis (excavated by M. Reddé in 1989), although the main cult image was of Osiris, the votives, in the form of small, locally-manufactured plaques, seem all to be of Serapis and Apis (1999, 106–12).

[103] On Serapis and healing, see Stambaugh 1972, 75–78, and Chap. 4.4.b.ii below. There is a good example of this process at Emporion (Ampurias): E. Sanmartí, P. Castañer and J. Tremoleda, Emporion: un ejemplo de monumentalización precoz en la Hispania republicana. Los santuarios helenísticos de su sector meridional, in W. Trillmich and P. Zanker (eds.), *Stadtbild und Ideologie. Die Monumentalisierung hispanischer Städte zwischen Republik und Kaiserzeit. Kolloquium in Madrid, Okt. 1987* (Munich 1990) 117–43; I. Rodà, La integración de una inscripción bilinguë ampuritana, *Boletín del Museo Arqueológico Nacional* 8 (1990) 79f.; E. Sanmartí-Grego, Identificació iconogràfica i possible atribució d'unes restes escultòriques trobades a la neàpolis emporitana al *simulacrum* del Sarapis d'Empòrion, *Miscellànea Arqueològica. A Josep M. Recasens* (Tarragona 1992) 145–54; J. Padró and E. Sanmartí, Serapis i Asclepi al món hellenistic: el cas d'Empúries, *Homenatge a M. Tarradell, Estudis Universitaris Catalans* 29 (Barcelona 1993) 611–28; J. Alvar, Los santuarios mistéricos en la Hispania republicana, in *III Congreso Hispano-Italiano. Italia e Hispania en la crisis de la República, Toledo, sept. 1993* (Madrid 1998) 413–423.

[104] Bricault 2005b; on Ammon, see J. Leclant and G. Clerc, s.v. Ammon, *LIMC* 1 (1981) nos. 141f.; also *InscrDél.* 2037 = *RICIS* 202/0338 (Serapeum C).

[105] García y Bellido 1967, 130 = *SEG* 32: 1082 *ter* = *RICIS* 603/0901.

like Isis-Thermouthis, he carries the cornucopiae. From Osiris he also derives his Pharaonic traits as protector of the kingdom, with all its cosmocratic implications. At the same time, Serapis became the consort of Isis: this change of divine partner allowed them to be represented in specifically Hellenistic iconographic form.[106] They often appear as such on Hellenistic coins, and shared temples not only at Alexandria but also in many of the harbour-cities of the Mediterranean.[107]

Clement of Alexandria cites the well-known Stoic Athenodoros of Kana, i.e. Athenodorus Calvus, the teacher of Octavian, for the claim that a certain Bryaxis, not however the sculptor of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, was commissioned to create the image of the new god.[108] One assumption commonly made since W. Ameling first collected the then known material in 1903 is that the statue in the Ptolemaic temple on Rhacotis was of Serapis sitting on a throne accompanied by Cerberus, modelled on an established type associated with both Zeus and Pluto but topped with a *kalathos*, the unmistakable symbol of the fecundity provided by the Nile-flood (Pl. 2).[109] Recent work however has suggested that there were so many different Serapis-types current in antiquity that it is impossible to determine with any exactitude how the cult-statue in fact appeared.[110] Nevertheless, despite the variety

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[106] E.g. Clerc and Leclant 1994, 1: 679–81 nos. 121–48; cf. Tran tam Tinh 1990, 1: 771–74 nos. 130–83. Ptolemy IV Philopator and Arsinoe III founded a large temple to themselves and Sarapis-Isis on the main street of ancient Alexandria (now Sharia el-Horreya), 5 blocks north of Rhacotis: B. Tkaczow, *Topography of Ancient Alexandria* (Warsaw 1993) 80, site 27, map B; Bernand 2001, 53–6 no. 18.

[107] For the coins, see L.Bricault, *Sylloge Nummorum Religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae* (*SNRIS*). Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres (Paris 2008); shared temples: Steuernagel 2004.

[108] *Protrept.* 4. 48.4–6, p. 74f. Marcovich. Ameling 1903, 85f. got rid of the problem of Clement's citation by complaining of the 'naiveté' of Athenodorus. Since he argued in favour of the ascription to Bryaxis (ibid., 97f.), the topic has been discussed to death; Hornbostel 1973, 51–58 with p. 390 famously concurred. But this identification is now, mainly on chronological grounds, generally considered impossible; nor is there good reason to accept any part of Athenodorus' fanciful account of Sesostris and the Serapis-statue, which is the sole evidence for Bryaxis' involvement. It is far from certain that this is a genuine citation and not a spoof: none of the usual reference-books acknowledge this material as authentic, e.g. J. von Arnim, s.v. Athenodoros no. 19, *RE* 2 (1896) 2045.

[109] Ameling 1903; cf. Clerc and Leclant 1994, 666; 668–70 nos. 1–19.

[110] Cf. Clerc and Leclant 1994, 689f. show that there are in fact numerous deviations in detail from the supposedly canonical type. One of the commonest types, esp. in terracotta, in fact shows the god standing (Tran tam Tinh 1983). The main point is surely that there are no surviving Hellenistic representations of the type: all known examples, in all media, date from the High Principate, cf. Schmidt 2005.

of types, Serapis is always represented with a Zeus-head surmounted by the *kalathos* (Pl. 3); this clearly was the Hellenistic substitute for the Egyptian iconography of Osiris. For her part, Isis took over that of Tyche/Fortuna, thus helping to fix her claim to sovereignty in the minds of her worshippers (Pl. 4). The pair is sometimes represented as a 'family', with Horus-the-child, i.e. Harpocrates, often shown as a baby being suckled at his mother's breast, a Hellenisation of one of the commonest Egyptian statuette types.[111]

Despite his absence from the mythological cycle, then, and despite recognition of his recent origin, the cult of Serapis succeeded thanks at least partly to institutional backing.[112] On the one hand, the men who put him together as a divinity of abundance well knew how to appeal to the needs in view of which he was created. On the other, it was the prestige of the Ptolemies (often indeed their territorial conquests), and of Isis, that enabled his cult to spread through the eastern Mediterranean.[113] Serapis' polyvalence helped meet the politico-religious uncertainties of the Hellenistic period: a god of everything, omnipresent, director of the cosmos, lord of production and reproduction, bulwark of monarchy, succour of the little man—and to all that he added personal command of the world beyond the grave. This was the kind of symbolic capital that a god now needed if he were to triumph.[114]

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[111] Tran tam Tinh 1973 presents the range of types of Isis suckling (sometimes she suckles the Apis-bull); cf. idem 1990, 1: 777–79.

[112] Even in Egypt, Serapis succeeded in replacing older Egyptian deities such as Osiris and Min/Pan: G. Hölbl, Ersetzt Sarapis altägyptische Götter in der römischen Provinz *Aegyptus*? in H. Heftner and K. Tomaschitz (eds.), *Festschrift für G. Dobesch zum 65. Geburtstag* (Vienna 2004) 601–07. At the Memnonion at Abydos, however, his oracular functions were taken over during the later Principate by Bes, cf. Bernand 1969, 525f. no. 131 (*proskynema* of the priest Harpocras).

[113] I am sceptical of the notion that the monarchy did not exert any political pressure to favour the cult. The proof is supposed to be the lack of fit between the pattern of dedications to Serapis and the political map of Ptolemaic conquests. Needless to say, I do not believe in Fraser's thesis that the cult spread 'innocently': P.M. Fraser, Two Studies on the Cult of Sarapis in the Hellenistic World, *Opuscula Atheniensia*, 3 (1960) 47. See the arguments of Stambaugh 1972, 93–98 and Brady 1987, 11–41; the latter goes carefully over the evidence in favour of the idea that the Ptolemies supported the spread of the Egyptian cults in the Aegean.

[114] Quite who the worshippers were is another question. Dunand 1973, 1: 59 emphasises his lack of success even at Alexandria, since the authors at court took no interest in him; Stambaugh, on the other hand, has no doubts, remarking simply, 'we know that he (Serapis) answered those prayers with satisfying frequency' (1972, 98). However the important recently-published inscription from Rhamnous shows that by c. 220 BC the κοινὸν τῶν Σαραπιαστῶν there (composed of Athenian citizens in garrison) was sufficiently influential to induce the Athenian general Apollodoros son

b. *The Myth of Cybele and Attis*

ταῦτα δὲ ἐγένετο μὲν οὐδέποτε, ἔστι
δὲ ἀεί, καὶ ὁ μὲν νοῦς ἅμα πάντα ὁρᾷ, ὁ
δὲ λόγος τὰ μὲν πρῶτα τὰ δὲ δεύτερα
λέγει.[115]

Sallustius, Περὶ τῶν θεῶν καὶ τοῦ
κόσμου §4 (p. 8.14–16 Nock), cf. Julian,
Or. 5, 170a

In the case of the myth of Attis and Cybele, it is far more difficult to set out the myth synoptically, since the surviving accounts differ wildly from one author to another, and there is no way of summarising or synthesising them that does not traduce one or other later tradition or variant.

There seem to have been several versions of the myth already in Phrygia that are hard to disentangle.[116] Pausanias himself acknowledges the difficulties he experienced in obtaining information at the sanctuary of Attis and the Mater Magna in Achaean Dyme (7.17.9), and contented himself with re-telling the account of the elegiac poet Hermesianax, a contemporary of Alexander the Great.[117] As we shall see, this version is of little use for our purposes. The situation is no better if we look at the other classical authors who claim to provide coherent, that is of course heavily-edited, versions of an exotic myth. We do not possess any original Phrygian documents that might give us an insight into the changes they have introduced and at the same time provide authentic information about the cultural context of the narrative.[118]

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of Sosigenes to sell them land for the construction of a temple of Serapis and Isis, and sufficiently wealthy both to decree him a golden crown in return and to have the resolution inscribed on a stele: *SEG* 49 (1999) 161 = *RICIS* 101/0502.

[115] "All this did not happen at any one time but always is so: the mind sees the whole process at once, words tell of part first, part second."

[116] See now the excellent critical survey by Bremmer 2004. On the belief that the Phrygians were a wise and ancient nation, see J.B. Rives, Phrygian tales, *GRBS* 45 (2005) 223–44.

[117] Cf. S. Heibges, s.v. Hermesianax 2, *RE* 8 (1913) 823–28.

[118] Hepding 1903, 5–97 is an exhaustive collection of texts; a selection, with Italian translation, in Sanzi 2003, 219–312; cf. Y. Dacosta, *Initiations et sociétés secrètes dans l'Antiquité gréco-romaine* (Paris 1991) 195ff. Borgeaud 1996/2004 offers a critical discussion of the various traditions, which perhaps errs in the direction of trying to tidy up the Roman versions too much. Lancellotti 2002 has been much criticised for her claim that the Pessinus myth presented a sterile anti-king who subverts the normative model of dynastic legitimacy; perhaps the most measured account is that of Roller 1999.

For our purposes, we need to leave aside the Lydian version told by Herodotus (1.34–43) and Pausanias (7.17.9), according to which Attis died as a result of the attack of a wild boar sent by Zeus: it is hopelessly contaminated by the story of Adonis.[119] These versions may be of value in providing evidence for the diffusion of the myth in other contexts, but they are irrelevant for the issue of how the pair Cybele and Attis was constructed, and for their cult in the Roman Empire. For that purpose, we need to concentrate on the Phrygian version. This was the source of the variants found in Classical literature, which link the death of Attis to his self-castration. 'The myth' is in fact an amalgam of stories about a variety of gods artificially connected with that of Attis; the collection of sources put together in chronological sequence by Hepding makes this fairly clear. Though a construct, the various stories do nevertheless acquire a definite coherence around the figure of Attis. We have in fact to do with the symbolic projection of an integrated cultural system; the variety of versions is reflected in the variety of stereotyped scenes presented by the iconography.[120]

The version that circulated most widely was probably the one narrated by Pausanias in the mid-second century AD.[121] An idea of the popularity of this version can be gained from the fact that in the early fourth century the Christian polemicist Arnobius offers essentially the same one, albeit padded out with details taken from a work on Cybele by a certain Timotheus (probably not to be identified with the Eumolpid).[122] Earlier authors echo this account. Catullus, for example, devoted his entire poem 63 to Attis, in a politico-cultural context hostile to new cults being introduced from the East, notwithstanding the fact that the Mater Magna, and apparently Attis, had for almost two centu-

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[119] Cf. Panyassis of Halicarnassus frg. 27 Bernabé (= 25 Kinkel) = Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 3.14.4. Bernabé assigns it to the fragments from uncertain works, cf. V.J. Matthews (ed.), *Panyassis of Halikarnassos. Text and Commentary* (Leyden 1974) 120–25.

[120] The iconography of the various scenes of the myth are usefully analysed by M.J. Vermaseren, *The Legend of Attis in Greek and Roman Art*. EPROER 9 (Leyden 1966).

[121] *Perieg.* 7.17.10–12, which explicitly states that it is γνωριμώτατα, most widely known.

[122] *Adv. nat.* 5.5–7; cf. R. Laqueur, s.v. Timotheos 14, *RE* 6A (1937) 1338. He is taken to be the Eumolpid by Burkert 1987, 73. On Arnobius, see H. le Bonniec, *Arnobe, Contre les gentils*, 1 (Budé) (Paris 1982) 7–93; C. Champeaux, *Arnobe, Contre les païens, 3* (Budé) (Paris 2007) i–xxxii; M.B. Simmons, *Arnobius of Sicca: Religious Conflict and Competition in the Age of Diocletian* (Oxford 1995). T. Zielinski, Les origines de la religion hellénistique, *RHR* 88 (1923) 173ff. once argued that the mysteries of Attis were influenced by Eleusis through Timotheus; see the comments of Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 33; Mora 1994, 116.

ries enjoyed worship on the Palatine.[123] This presence of the Phrygian gods in the centre of Rome induced Ovid to devote a long passage of the *Fasti* to the Mater Magna, in connection with the grand April festival of the *Megalensia*.[124] It is in this context that he offers a version of the same myth to account for the fact that Cybele's most devoted followers castrate themselves (223–44). This account obviously reflects the interest aroused among Roman intellectuals by the cult in the late Republic and under Augustus. The version of Diodorus Siculus, which is heavily contaminated by the myth of Apollo and Marsyas, was written at much the same time (3. 58f.). From all these materials we can construct a fairly satisfactory idea of the narrative. Arnobius' detailed version is the liveliest, and I follow it to a large extent here.

Fired with lust for Cybele, Zeus masturbated and the sperm fell onto the rock Agdos, which gave birth to a hermaphrodite named Agdistis.[125] This creature evinced such a lamentable inability to control its sexual and other urges that the gods decided to supplement the deficiency by emasculating it. Dionyus/Liber was commissioned to carry out the divine plan.[126] He put wine into the spring where Agdistis used to drink,

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[123] Nauta 2004, 610–18; cf. T. Callejas, El carmen 63 de Catulo: la cuestión del género literario, in *Actes del 9 Simposi de la secció catalana de la SEEC 1988* (Barcelona 1991) 159–66; Harder 2004; Harrison 2004.

[124] *Fasti* 4.179–90, 337–72, cf. *InscrIt* XIII.2 pp. 435–38.

[125] M. Meslin, Agdistis ou l'androgynie malséante, in de Boer and Edridge 1978, 765–776, argues rather unconvincingly that the relation beween Attis and Agdistis was homosexual (in Arnobius, Agdistis is still masculine). There are many parallels to the theme of fecundation of a rock by divine sperm. In the so-called Hurrite-Hittite cosmogony, Kumarbi, the father of the gods, bites off the testicles of Anu, which makes him pregnant with triplets, one of whom is Teshub. Teshub seizes power from Kumarbi, who, in order to recover it, decides to create a divinity to oppose him. So he masturbates onto a rock, from which is born an anthropomorphic stone named Ullikummi, cf. W. Burkert,Von Ullikummi zum Kaukasus: die Felsgeburt des Unholds. Zur Kontinuität einer mündlichen Erzählung, *Würzburger Jahrbuch für die Altertumswissenschaft* 5 (1979) 253–61. The sole classical reference to the nexus divine masturbation-divinity born from a rock occurs in [Plutarch], *De fluviis* 23.4, where Mithra is said to have produced an offspring by this means. This is clearly a transformation of the birth of Mithras from a rock (see below). W.D. O'Flaherty, *Women, Androgynes and Other Mythical Beasts* (Chicago and London 1980) explores with great verve the religious and social functions of hermaphroditism in India. Alhough she makes a point of comparison with other mythologies, one is surprised to find no mention of Attis nor of the dismemberment of Osiris, which might be thought relevant to her argument. Agdistis is clearly an example of her category of 'chaotic androgynes' (p. 332). Classical mythology is silent on the sexuality of Cybele, though it of course mentions the castration of Attis; in Hinduism, by contrast, Sati (Dakshayani), an aspect of Devi, copulates like Isis with the erect, albeit severed, penis (*linga*) of her consort Śiva.

[126] Arnobius, *C. gent*. 5.6.1–5 = Sanzi 2003, 279, Cybele no. 39.2.

to such effect that it had to sleep off its stupor. He then tied its testicles to its feet so that when the thing awoke the sudden wrench tore them off. There was much blood, and out of the blood-stained ground there grew an almond-tree, one of whose nuts was eaten (or simply secreted) by Nana, the daughter of the river Sangarius, and apparently one of the hypostases of Cybele. By this rather unusual means, Nana became pregnant with Attis. Being unwanted, the child was exposed, but this resort by Sangarius failed of its object because a goat-herd named Phorbas took care of him. When the boy reached adolescence he too worked as a herdsman, of such extraordinary beauty that everyone fell in love with him, until finally Agdistis, being now solely female and as such identified with Cybele, succumbed to the charms of her own flesh and blood.[127]

Ovid's account allows us to establish links with figures from other myths. In his version Attis is simply a young Phrygian herdsman who breaks his promise of remaining faithful to the Great Mother by agreeing to marry Ia, the daughter of king Midas of Pessinus. Agdistis/Cybele, whom we must take to be the abandoned lover, plans her revenge. The only ancient version explicitly to state that Agdistis/Cybele and Attis enjoyed a sexual relation is that of Diodorus (3.58.4), who also says she became pregnant. It must be admitted that Agdistis' character is hardly consistent with the idea of chaste maternal affection. At any rate, I am inclined to argue in favour of a dual interpretation of Agdistis/Cybele that more or less faithfully reproduces the complexity of the relation mother/lover.[128] The next climax is the vengeance wreaked by Cybele

[127] This is the version of Pausanias, who attributes to Agdistis the role in the tragedy assigned by other sources to Cybele, cf. Mora 1994, 119.

[128] In my view, the well-known *symbolon* cited by Clement of Alexandria refers to this hierogamy: ἐκ τυμπάνου ἔφαγον ἐκ κυμβάλου ἔπιον, ἐκερνοφόρησα, ὑπὸ τὸν παστὸν ὑπέδυν. 'I have eaten from the tambourine, I have drunk from the cymbal, I have carried the sacred vessels, I have pushed past the curtain of the marriage chamber': Clement, *Protr*. 2.15.3 Stählin, p. 24.11f. Marcovich = Sanzi 2003, 266: Cybele no. 29.1. Firmicus Maternus, *De errore* 18.1 (= Sanzi 2003, 304: Cybele 49.2) cites the same *symbolon*, albeit with the final phrase substituted by γέγονα μύστης Ἄττεως, 'I am an initiate of Attis'. This variant may not be an error or distortion, for there may have been two (or more) versions, such that hierogamy was the final goal of initiation. The argument of P. Boyancé, Sur les mystères phrygiens: 'J'ai mangé dans le tympanon, j'ai bu dans le cymbale', *REA* 37 (1935) 161–64 = idem, *Études sur la religion romaine* (Rome 1972) 201–04, is completely different. He offers an idealist interpretation according to which we have to do with a musical rite of purification, where the food is imaginary. Though he does not explicitly discuss the final phrase, it seems clear from his general position that he takes the hierogamy to have been a mere dream-fantasy. I discuss this passage further below, Chap. 4.3.d, on initiation in the cult of Cybele and Attis.

at the wedding of Attis and Ia. The singing of the marriage-hymn has hardly begun when Agdistis/Cybele, furious with sexual desire, bursts in upon the ceremony and turns it into a blood-bath. All the men present are filled with maddening sexual desire: Attis picks up a flint and emasculates himself beneath a pine-tree (which becomes his symbol as a god [Pl. 20]), while his followers, filled with the same madness, cut off their testicles in public. In her misery, the bride cuts off her own two breasts. From the spot where the blood spills on the ground, violets grow.

Things quieten down. Agdistis/Cybele begins to regret the horror she has caused and implores Zeus to allow her lover to be restored to life. Zeus grants that Attis shall ever after remain in his tomb free from corruption and decay, manifesting his immortality by the fact that his hair continues to grow and his little finger moves, perhaps as a sort of epiphany of his penis (Loisy 1930, 93 n. 2).[129] That the tomb of Attis remained a powerful image in the cult is suggested by a recently-discovered *defixio* from Alcácer do Sal in Lusitania which addresses the *megaron*, the subterranean chamber that received the corpse of Attis (and where he evidently remains), and is likewise to receive the body of the person who stole the writer's property.[130] The death of Attis is likewise thematised by an analogous recent discovery, a *defixio* from the joint sanctuary of Mater Magna and Isis at Moguntiacum (Mainz) in Germania Superior, which appeals to *bone sancte Atthis tyranne* to destroy a man named Liberalis *per tuum Castorem, Pollucem*.[131] The reference to

[129] According to Pausanias, the tomb was still shown to tourists at Pessinus in II^{p} (1.4.5).

[130] *Domine megare invicte, tu qui Attidis corpus accepisti, accipias corpus eius qui*…I have used the text of F. Marco Simón, Magia y cultos orientales: acerca de una *defixio* de Alcácer do Sal (Setúbal) con mención de Atis, MHNH 4 (2004) 79–94. Marco Simón himself argues that *megare* is a mis-writing for *megale*, and translates "Gran señor invicto", but to my mind he does not succeed in showing why a supposed femine form of μέγας should have somehow crept into the title. One might also understand *megare* as an abbreviated form of *megale(nsis)*, 'having to do with Cybele', but what we need is a reference to the grave. Given that the appeal is to a site that *contains* the body of Attis, it is surely relevant that μέγαρον can also mean 'tomb' (LSJ^{9} sense III.2), a sense clearly related to its meaning in the cult of Demeter, where it denoted a pit into which piglets were thrown to decompose (Pausanias 1.40.6); cf. Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2000, 216. I take it that the neuter *megarum* (only attested in Latin otherwise in *CIL* XIV18; 19 = *RICIS* 503/1220–1 with Bricault's note = a meeting-room for Isiaci at Ostia) has acquired a false vocative form *-e* by contamination. Despite the early date, *invictus* must allude to Attis' astral/cosmic status (see p. 38 nn. 38 and 39 above).

[131] *AE* 2004: 1026, with the commentaries of Blänsdorf 2004; 2008, no. 2. One of the same group of texts likewise refers to the *megaron* as a place of death: *rogo te,*

Castor and Pollux here suggests that it was his dual character as a deity associated both with the heavenly gods and with the world below, a divine sort-crosser in fact, that made it natural to appeal to Attis in such contexts.[132] But the primary association is with death.

The classic interpretation of the myth is that of Frazer, according to whom Attis is to be classified with Osiris and Adonis.[133] All three are to be regarded as vegetation-gods, whose very similar myths symbolically represent the annually-repeated regeneration of nature.[134] One of Frazer's show-texts, at least as regards Attis, was Plutarch's claim, around AD 120, that the Phrygians believe that their god sleeps during the winter and wake up again in spring (*De Iside* 69, 378e).[135] Another was a passage of Firmicus Maternus, in the mid-fourth century AD, according to which the Phrygians understand their festivals as a thanksgiving for the harvest and the following seed-time; Attis is the harvest,

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Mater Magna, megaro tuo (i.e. the victim, Tib. Claudius Adiutor) *recipias, et Attis domine, te precor*…Blänsdorf 2008 no. 8 (all the *defixiones* from the sacrificial area date from c. AD 70–130). Julian, *Or.* 5. 168c refers to the place where Attis was laid after his death as an ἄντρον, for which *megarum* must be a synonym (or possibly a term for a site within the *penetrale* that represented it).

[132] Blänsdorf 2004, 55f. sees them as tokens of Attis' equivalence with Zeus/Jupiter. However the Dioscuri are already associated with Agdistis/Meter in Anatolia: E. Schwertheim, Denkmäler zur Meterverehrung in Bithynien und Mysien, in S. Şahin, E. Schwertheim and J. Wagner (eds.), *Studien zur Religion und Kultur Kleinasiens. Festschrift für K. Dörner.* EPROER 66 (Leyden 1978) 829 no. 4. The well-known Hellenistic 'initiation'-relief from Lebadeia (*CCCA* 2: 131f. no. 432, pl. CXXVII) which shows a number of divine figures, including the Dioscuri, in company with enthroned Cybele, suggests that they could be thought of as having a special connection with transitions or changes of status, cf. Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 22f.; eadem 1973, 141ff. However their immediate association in the *defixio* from Mainz is with the grave; the Dioscuri appear repeatedly in Roman funerary contexts, evidently on account of their transition between two worlds: "Le contexte funéraire est, de tous ceux où les deux divinités trouvent place, celui qui offre la gamme la plus riche de sujets et de schémas" (F. Gury, s.v. Castores, *LIMC* 3, 1: 608–35 at 631; cf. 2: 501ff.). Recent work on Roman mythological sarcophagi has reminded us of the arbitrariness of the evocations of classical myth in the Empire, cf. Zanker and Ewald 2004: merely because the Castores came back to life in most Greek versions is no reason to argue for the association in later contexts.

[133] Frazer 1914, 1: 261–317; 2, passim; also H.S. Versnel in Bianchi and Vermaseren 1982, 906f.

[134] Attis as a tree-spirit: 1914, 1: 277–80; Osiris as corn-god: 1914, 2: 96–107; as tree-spirit: 107–12. A good account of Frazer's comparativist methods and pre-occupations in Csapo 2005, 29–67. In the same sense, Pettazzoni 1924/1997, 84f. cites [Hippolytus], *Ref. haer.* 5.9.8: λέγουσι δὲ αὐτόν…Φρύγες καὶ χλοερὸν στάχυν…, without mentioning the context (cf. n. 31 above).

[135] 1914, 2: 40–42. In fact Plutarch opposes winter and summer (not spring) and says the Phrygians τοτὲ μὲν κατευνασμοὺς τοτὲ δ' ἀνεργέρσεις βακχεύοντες αὐτῷ τελοῦσι, 'celebrate his falling asleep in winter and his re-awakenings in summer with ecstatic junketings'.

in that he is born from it, and his emasculation is the same as what the harvester does with his sickle when the grain is ripe, his death being commemorated by the storage of the grain after it has been gathered in.[136] Frazer, very much under the influence of Wilhelm Mannhardt's (1831–80) neo-Romantic theories about the primitive Teutonic tree-cult, argued this thesis at vast and learned length.[137] Insofar as it applies to Adonis, however, it was subjected in the early 1970s to a withering critique by Marcel Detienne, who complained that 'l'auteur du Rameau d'Or n'a voulu voir que l'affinité d'Adonis avec la végétation: si ce personnage passe le tiers de l'année dans les régions inférieures et le reste sur la terre, n'est-ce pas le preuve qu'il incarne l'esprit du blé?'.[138] It now seems clear that at least Adonis' supposed connection with wheat was simply invented by Frazer, who abused the comparative method in order to get all three gods to resemble one another as much as possible, thus creating a series of equations similar to those of ancient writers, such as Plutarch, in an effort to impose order on the divine world. Detienne's pin-pointing of myrrh as the myth's central symbol suggests that the narrative circulates rather round two nodal oppositions, eating/condiments and marriage/perfume. The world of scents naturally produced by certain herbs provides a kind of index of

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[136] *Amare terram volunt (Phryges) fruges, Attin vero hoc ipsum volunt esse quod ex frugibus nascitur, poenam autem quam sustinuit volunt esse quod falce messor maturis frugibus facit. Mortem ipsius dicunt quod semina collecta conduntur, vitam rursus quod iacta semina annuis vicibus reconduntur*: *De errore* 3.2. = Sanzi 2003, 303: Cybele 49.1, with the comments of Turcan 1982a, 194 ad loc.

[137] W. Mannhardt, *Wald- und Feldkulte, 1: Der Baumkultus der alten Germanen und ihrer Nachbarstämme* (Berlin 1875); Frazer usually cites his posthumous *Mythologische Forschungen* (Strasburg 1884). Frazer's main discussion of the theme is to be found in *The Golden Bough³ 5: Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild* (London and Basingstoke 1912) 1: 131–70. Until Smith 1987, the thesis was at one time widely accepted as a simple fact, e.g. Pettazzoni 1924/1997, 84. As I have noted in the Introduction, however, there have been recent attempts to substantiate the structural pattern, albeit within a non-Frazerian framework: Mettinger 2001; Xella 2001.

[138] M. Detienne, *Les Jardins d'Adonis: La mythologie des aromates en Grèce* (Paris 1972) 12. Detienne's argument, and that of J.-P. Vernant's important introduction (pp. i–xlvii), are brilliantly expounded by Csapo 2005, 262–76. We should however note that not everyone has been equally enthusiastic about this structuralist analysis: G. Piccaluga, for example, was extremely critical at the time: Adonis e i profumi di un certo strutturalismo, *Maia* 26 (n.s. 1) (1974) 33–51, cf. Gordon 1979b, 301–04; more recently J. Reed, The Sexuality of Adonis, *Classical Antiquity* 14 (1995) 321–44 at 322ff. As Csapo points out: "Structuralism's model of ideology is a totalizing system from which there is no escape…even prostitutes joyfully celebrate their uselessness and social inferiority" (2005, 276).

the social order, thus marginalising (but in my view not totally discrediting) Frazer's vegetative cycle.

In considering the relation between Attis and that cycle, we must also take into account his explicit connection with the pine-tree. According to the myth, it was beneath a pine-tree that Attis emasculated himself and died (see Pl. 20), and this event was ritually reproduced at the festival of the Mater Magna on 22nd March, the day *arbor intrat*, when the *dendrophori*, whose duty it was, carried a pine-trunk into the temple, which then withered over the following weeks.[139] Moreover, as we saw earlier, pseudo-Hippolytus says that the Phrygians called Attis 'the unripe ear of grain'.[140] The series of rhetorical questions posed by Firmicus Maternus is relevant here, since he asks what seeds and grain have to do with funerals, or death, despair and punishment with love, thus inadvertently revealing the way his opponents interpreted the myth.[141] Severe modern critics prefer to marginalise such references.[142]

Although of course I accept that a myth may be read at several different levels, and may also contain contradictions that reproduce

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[139] Cf. Cumont 1929, 52–55; Vermaseren 1977, 113 and 120; 1981c. Vermaseren suggests that reliefs showing the death of Attis beneath the pine were commonly dedicated in Metroac temples; their iconography often disguises or softens the harshness of the event (1981c, 425f.). The withering of the pine in the temple is used as the indicative image in one of the new 'judicial curses' from the joint temple of Isis and the Mater Magna at Mainz, c. 70–130: *ita uti arbor siccabit se in sancto, sic et illi siccet fama, fides, fortuna, faculitas*, "just as the tree will wither in the sanctuary, so may reputation, good name, fortune, ability to act wither in his case": J. Blänsdorf, Magical Methods in the Curse-Tablets from the Sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz, in F. Marco Simón (ed.), *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference held at the University of Zaragoza, 30th Sept.–1st Oct. 2005* (Leyden 2008) no. 18. I discuss the rituals associated with the death of Attis further in Chap. 4.3.e below.

[140] [Hippolytus], *Ref.* 5.9.8; see n. 31 above.

[141] *Vellem nunc mihi inquirenti respondeant, cur hanc simplicitatem seminum ac frugum cum funere, cum morte, cum fastu, cum poena, cum amore iunxerunt? Itane non erat aliud quod diceretur?* (*De errore* 3.3, omitted by Sanzi). I consider the entire passage 3.1–5 extremely instructive (see also Turcan 1982a, 188–98).

[142] M. Meslin, for example, denies that they were originally agrarian cults (1985, 185). According to him, the initiate who dies and is reborn is not reproducing an ancient ritual based on the vegetative cycle but, in a far more 'religious' spirit, expressing a profound idea regarding death and resurrection. It is more serious for my position that even Tryggve Mettinger omits Attis from his category of ancient dying-rising gods, on the grounds that the "resurrection is no original part of the celebrations" (2001, 27; cf. 157f.) In these matters speculation is unavoidable, but I believe that there was both an original mythification of the vegetative cycle and a later re-elaboration of these ideas in the context of initiation into the mysteries, based on models inherited from a period when the old ideas, as their original meaning faded, were modified to fit them into a new semantic setting.

those in the real world, I would like to propose what we might call an 'integrative model' that takes the ancient interpretations to be mutually compatible—which of course does not mean that any one or other of them must be correct. Accepting the myth of Attis, say, as an account of a natural rhythm allows us to acknowledge an entire range of oppositions whose function is to turn chaos into order. The myth traverses a range of ambiguities thereby defining the limits that determine this particular cultural production. Foremost among these ambiguities are death and the experience of life after death. The development of a discourse about the gods' ability to satisfy such human longings provides a means of escaping the shadow of death, or at any rate modifying its horror by means of new ambiguities. At the same time, the narrative deploys a number of categories that together set the terms of the distinction between divine and human, in such a way however as to assuage other anxieties concerning the inexplicable. Within the general framework of a hierarchy of living beings, the myth sets out what is acceptable within the given culture, assigning alternatives—in this case bestiality, aberration, anomalous reproduction—to the category of the Other, with all that such distinctions imply about the individual's moral duties towards others. In that respect, I follow the familiar modified structuralism of the School of Paris, viewing myth as a site where the oppositions nature/culture, normality/anomaly, and the risks inherent in deviation from the rules, are given free rein.[143] At the same time, myth contains further information.

For me, the legitimacy of Frazer's procedure lies in the fact that he tried to lay out the co-ordinates of what I have termed a system of belief. This system comprised: the cosmic order, which is a function of the nature of the gods; a sense of what it is to live and be a human-being in the world; and a vision of the world beyond death. If we analyse the myths, we find an aetiological account of the solar cycle, and, as a function of that, the vegetative cycle. But this level of analysis is by no means incompatible with the others that I examine in this book, those of the system of belief or the system of values, or that of ritual. The social order, as analysed by Detienne and Borgeaud, belongs to the *imaginaire* and really is, at least in part, shaped by the

[143] Cf. P. Borgeaud, L'écriture d'Attis: le récit dans l'histoire, in C. Calame (ed.), *Métamorphose du mythe en Grèce ancienne* (Geneva 1988) 87–103; J. Podemann Sørensen, The Myth of Attis: Structure and Mysteriosophy, in idem 1989, 23–29.

feelings of human-beings in the world and by ethical norms, that is, the system of values. It is in this area, where there is plenty of space for differing interpretations of the myth, that the full range of its cultural possibilities becomes clear.

In the particular case of the Phrygian cults, then, the myth gives us an insight into cosmic processes linked to the dual nature of the gods. The emperor Julian in fact interpreted the myth as an allegory of the creation of the world, with Cybele animating the demiurgic Logos (Attis) that generates living beings.[144] It is also, and with less interpretative strain, a faithful reflection of the desire for an explanation of the vegetative cycle, just as we saw in the case of Isis. This being a text that lays claim to being aboriginal, it can also be interpreted in many other ways, for example, as an ill-fated life-cycle myth, from adolescence to maturity.[145] That would imply a didactic intention. Other readings too are possible, such as those I intend to offer later, related to the moral and the eschatological orders of things.

Nevertheless there is some evidence that seems to legitimate an interpretation of this divine pair as creating a cosmic order capable of triumphing over the disorder caused by transgressions in this world. One is a recently-discovered *defixio* from Groß-Gerau, on the main military road from Mainz to Lopodunum, capital of the *civitas Sueborum Nicrensium* on the right bank of the Rhine. This text, dated late-first/early-second century AD, appeals to Attis, as *deum maxsime Atthis tyranne*, together with the entire company of the Twelve Gods (*totumque duodecatheum*), to vindicate the writer for the wrong done him by a woman, Priscilla, who has betrayed the *sacra* of a man named Paternus (perhaps the writer) and married someone else.[146] Until the discovery of this text no one

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[144] At *Or.* 5, 161c he argues that Attis is the material form of the fertile, demiurgic intelligence that brings everything into being; at 166d he says explicitly that Attis is the demiurge *par excellence*; at 175a he calls him the unmediated demiurge of the material world, cf. V. Ugenti, *Giuliano imperatore, Alla Madre degli dei* (Lecce 1992), who analyses the myth in terms of neo-Platonic allegory.

[145] As is done by J. Strauss Clay 1995. Catullus' version of Attis may resemble the Black Hunter, but we would do well to remember that our information about him is far more extensive, so that we are in a position to see that the explanation in terms of a life-cycle ritual is too limited to be totally satisfying. The transition certainly fails, but it does so because of the transgression of the rule against incest, which lies at the heart of the myth. In my view, any analysis of Catullus 63 that does not make this point cannot fail to be a distortion.

[146] *AE* 2004: 1006a–b; M. Scholz and A. Kropp, Priscilla, die Verräterin: Ein Fluchtafel mit Rachegeber aus Groß-Gerau, in Broderson and Kropp 2004, 33–40; colour photos in M. Reuter and M. Scholz, *Geritzt und Entziffert: Schriftzeugnisse der römischen*

would have credited that Attis could have been addressed in such a manner at this date, or have been appealed to in order to reinforce a claim to justice, to right a wrong done to the speaker.[147] More doubtful—at any rate more subjective—is the evidence of the Parabiago dish, now generally dated to the fourth century AD (Pl. 5).[148] Attis is seated beside Cybele in her chariot drawn by four charging lions, surrounded by symbolism suggesting that a cosmic order has been definitively established.[149] If the majority view of the date is correct, as it surely is, this image could be fitted into the context of the allegorical interpretation offered by Julian, which tells us a great deal about the historical shifts of interpretation in the cult of the Mater Magna:

> Immediately after the castration, the trumpet sounds the recall for Attis and for all of us who once flew down from heaven and fell to earth. And after this signal, when King Attis stays his limitless course by his castration (ὅτε ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἄττις ἵστησι τὴν ἀπειρίαν διὰ τῆς ἐκτομῆς), the god bids us also root out the unlimited in ourselves and imitate the gods our leaders and hasten back to the defined and uniform, and, if it be possible, to the One itself (ἐπὶ δὲ τὸ ὡρισμένον καὶ ἑνοειδὲς καί, εἴπερ οἷόν τέ ἐστιν, αὐτὸ τὸ ἓν ἀνατρέχειν). After this, the *Hilaria* must by all means follow.
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> Julian, *Orat.* 5, 169c, trans. W.C. Wright

And:

> But when after staying his limitless progress, he has set in order the chaos of our world through his sympathy with the cycle of the equinox, where mighty Helios controls the most perfect symmetry of his motion within due limits, then the goddess gladly leads him upwards towards herself, or rather keeps him by her side (ἐπανάγει πρὸς ἑαυτὴν ἡ θεὸς ἀσμένως, μᾶλλον δὲ ἔχει παρ' ἑαυτῇ).
>
> ibid., 171c2–7

Informationsgesellschaft (Stuttgart 2004) 70f. no. 108a/b/c. The grammar is unclear: Attis and the Twelve gods, in the accusative, seem to be invoked to guarantee that the curse will be effective, i.e. we should understand *per* at the beginning. The actual destruction is to be accomplished by the local *deae*.

147 The text proves conclusively that Lambrechts' belief that Attis only became a god in the course of III^{p} cannot be sustained (there are several other recent texts of the same kind, which I allude to in Chap. 4.3.b). That does not however necessarily indicate that his main point, the late date of the introduction of the *Hilaria*, must also be wrong.

148 See the discussion of the date, n. 343 below.

149 Some good remarks on the cultural and literary context of the *lanx* by Turcan 1992a, 74 and 1996b, 397f., where he defends the view that Attis represents the soul.

The text from Groß-Gerau perhaps legitimates the inference that, whatever the contribution of neo-Platonist ideas to Julian's conception of Attis, his contribution to the maintenance of moral order was a much older theme.

c. *Mithras*[150]

> *Nam omnes, qui in haec studia incumbimus, ex iisdem veterum fontibus nostra haurimus, eademque omnes refundere cogimur.*
>
> P. della Torre, De Mithra eiusque tabulis symbolicis, in *Monumenta veteris Antii*…(Rome 1700) 157–252 at 157f.

> Wenig ist, was wir von Mithras mit Sicherheit wissen.
>
> G. Zoega, *Ueber die den Dienst des Mithras betreffenden römischen Kunstdenkmäler* (1798–9) p. 94 (ed. F. Welcker, 1817)

> [Zoega] erkannte im Mithras, welcher den Urtypus des Lebens, den Urstier opfert, den grossen Vermittler zwischen dem guten und bösen Prinzipe, Ormuzd und Ariman. Das Gute siegt. Der Stier unterliegt in der Welt der Erscheinungen, aber sein Geist kehrt in Ormuzd's Lichtwelt zurück, und seine Hülle wird zum befruchtenden Keim des Lebendigen und Lebenerhaltenden.
>
> Friederike Brun, *Römisches Leben* (Leipzig 1833) 113

In trying to study the specific beliefs of the cult of Mithras we encounter not merely the interpretative problems we have already seen, but others too, arising from the fact that there is no discursive literary account of the kind we were able to use for the Egyptian and Phrygian cults. Indeed, there is no firm evidence that there even was a proper myth

[150] 'Mithras' is the conventional form of the name in English and German, on the authority of scattered epigraphic evidence, e.g. V. 827 (the nominative form is hardly ever found of course). It was probably the usual form in Latin. However it is certain that both the indeclinable Μίθρα and the Ionic/Atticising form Μίθρης were current both in Anatolia and among learned circles in the Roman Empire (the earliest imperial example of indecl. Μίθρα is Justin, *Dial. Tryph.* 78.6; of Μίθρης Plutarch, *Pomp.* 24.7). The form in all the Romance languages, including Spanish, is Mit(h)ra. On the Indian and Iranian forms, cf. G. Bonfante, The Name of Mithras, in Duchesne-Guillemin 1978, 47–57.

of Mithras. From the wretchedly inadequate literary sources, we know that several authors wrote more or less extensively about the cult.[151] Porphyry, for example, tells us that a certain Euboulus wrote a treatise on Mithras in many books (i.e. long chapters). It has been argued that this work was used by the early neo-Pythagorean theologians Numenius and Cronius in the mid-second century for their reinterpretations of ancient wisdom.[152] On the supposition that Euboulus' work was already known at this period, he may conceivably have been close to the process of creating the Roman mysteries, which, at any rate on Roger Beck's hypothesis, may have occurred within the loose context of the dynasty of Commagene and the eminent persons connected with it, such as the astronomer Tib. Claudius Balbillus.[153] The dating of Euboulus is however highly uncertain.[154] On the other hand, Porphyry himself says that the best writer on the mysteries of Mithras was a man named Pallas.[155] However, although these two writers were used, or at least cited, by Porphyry, there is no evidence that they narrated

[151] The fullest presentation of the Classical, late-antique and oriental sources remains that of Cumont, *TMMM* 2: 1–73, supplemented by the texts collected in F. Cumont, *Les mystères de Mithra*[3] (Brussels 1913) Appendice. However Sanzi 2003, 411–41 nos.1–27 provides a useful basic collection, using recent editions and with an Italian translation, including the (rather hopeful) texts of the hymns or logia from the Santa Prisca mithraeum, published in 1965, and the so-called 'Mithraic catechism' (*P.Berol*. 21196).

[152] Porphyry, *De abstin*. 4.16.2; *De antro* 6; Jerome, *Adv. Jovin*. 2.14; for the mid-second century dating of Euboulus (and Pallas), cf. Turcan 1975, 23–43; Beck 1984, 2055. On Numenius, see M. Frede, Numenius, *ANRW* II.36.2, 1034–75.

[153] Cf. Beck 1998a = 2004a, 31–44. I myself think the scenario quite implausible, though this is not the place to pursue the point.

[154] Although it might be tempting, with Cumont, to identify him with the contemporary of Porphyry who was head of the Academy at Athens around the year 260 CE, since this would provide a literary work to explain the sudden interest of the high Roman aristocracy in the cult that begins in the late third century, Turcan is rightly sceptical (1975, 38f.). There were several Platonist philosophers of this name, and no work on Mithras is recorded for the Athenian Euboulus. It is the general nature of his work and the way he associates Mithraism with the magi of Persia that may indicate a link with the emergence of the new cult; but Porphyry's interest in him may equally have arisen from Euboulus having recently 'platonised' the cult. It is difficult to come down firmly on either side.

[155] It is commonly assumed that Pallas lived at the time of Hadrian (see the discussion by Turcan 1975, 39f.). But this date is simply an inference from Porphyry, who says that according to Pallas Hadrian abolished human sacrifice (*De abstin*. 2, 56). On this reasoning, we could be sure that Livy or Clement of Alexandria lived in the fourth century BC. The trouble is that Porphyry does not place the two writers in any chronological relationship (I see no reason to follow Turcan in thinking that Pallas wrote a commentary on Euboulus), so that it is arbitrary to suppose that Pallas must have been earlier.

a complete or coherent myth of Mithras. Moreover it is striking that his cult is completely absent from Clement of Alexandria, Arnobius and pseudo-Hippolytus, which might well imply that there was no documented narrative for them to get their teeth into. What Christian polemicists, such as Justin and Tertullian, picked up (and surely distorted) was Mithraic ritual practice. In the present state of our knowledge, the uncertainty remains. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that there was some sort of narrative account of the god's doings, whatever its degree of antiquity. It must have described his experiences in a manner analogous to what we know from the iconography of the Mithraic reliefs with side-panels or bye-scenes that summarised the beliefs of the god's adherents (Pl. 6).

Many scholars have offered similes to give an impression of the difficulty of reconstructing a, or the, Mithraic narrative in the absence of a solid textual basis. My suggestion is that we should compare it to the catechism of Pedro de Gante (c. 1479–1572), which consists mainly of pictures (which he called *jeroglíficos*, hieroglyphics) by means of which for fifty years he taught the indigenous Aztec children at his arts and crafts school S. José de Belén the rudiments of the Christian faith.[156] The comparison gains additional value from the fact that the Mithraic images also had an educative or instructional component, which helps to explain their relative uniformity all over the Roman world.

We are thus obliged to reconstruct the narrative mainly from the iconographic sources, supplemented by one or two isolated references in Classical sources. As a result, we can hardly hope to do more than gain a rough outline of the story, accepting that we have lost the subtleties, conscious and unconscious, that figure in the literary documentation, such as it is. This is one of the reasons why the cult is often considered somewhat different from the other oriental cults.[157]

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[156] On 13th August 1523, three years after the conquest of Mexico, three Franciscans of Flemish origin arrived in Veracruz. After they had learned Náhuatl in order to preach the gospel to the Aztecs, two of them perished on Cortés' expedition to Honduras, but Pedro de Gante (Pedro de Mura = Pieter van der Moere = Peter of Ghent) survived and taught in Mexico City all the rest of his life, cf. J. Martínez, *Hernán Cortés* (Mexico City 1990) 92. A facsimile edition of Peter's text-book has been published: *Catecismo de la doctrina cristiana con jeroglíficos, para la enseñanza de los indios de México* (ed. F. Navarro) (Madrid 1970). The most sophisticated form of the method was that used by Domingo de la Testera.

[157] The problem is well set out by Sfameni Gasparro 1979a and 1979b, though we would do well to heed the critical remarks of M.V. Cerutti, Mithra 'dio mistico' o 'dio in vicenda'?, in Bianchi 1979, 389–95. There are at present very few scholars

The central theme of Mithraism is the tauroctony, the killing of the bull. The young god, in heroic pose (for that reason he is very occasionally represented heroically nude), holds the animal down and drives his dagger into its neck, at the same time wrenching the head up by inserting his fingers into the nostrils (Pl. 6). At the same time, he prevents the bull from getting up by pressing his left leg hard into its back. It is clear from several standard details that the bull's death is connected with the coming of life. The animal's tail often ends in one or more heads of wheat, which clearly connotes the idea that the sacrifice is itself fecundative.[158] Then again, a scorpion attacks the bull's testicles, perhaps so as to obtain some of its life-force. The snake, which is often shown licking at the wound, seems to be a chthonic symbol, a sort of receptionist at the desk of death.[159]

Apart from this stereotyped central scene, which offers numerous minor, indeed minute (and quite unimportant), variants with respect to the god's stance and the bull's behaviour, we find a variety of figures either incorporated into the scene or (mainly) above and around it. The most constant of these are 1) the two young torchbearers, Cautes and Cautopates, who were sometimes clearly regarded as gods in their own right, since they are the object of vows, and votive-offerings; and 2) Sol (top left) and Luna (top right), who signify the ordered rhythm of the cosmos (Pl. 11).[160] Less frequent are the signs of the zodiac, either in a circle around the scene, or in an arch above (Pl. 6); their connotation is the same, albeit this time focused upon the annual path of the sun through the ecliptic. Very occasionally more elaborate reliefs show the four main winds, signifying the cardinal directions, and so once again the cosmic order; and the seasons. In addition to these, the so-called panelled reliefs and frescoes, known mainly but by no means exclusively from Germania Superior, offer a variety of secondary scenes that seem to illustrate moments from the life of Mithras, scenes that

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who would subscribe to J. Toutain's enthusiastic declaration at the beginning of the last century that the epigraphic evidence allows us to "write the history of the cult of Mithras": La légende de Mithra étudiée surtout dans les bas-reliefs mithriaques, in idem, *Études de mythologie et d'histoire des religions antiques* (Paris 1909) 229. Note the positivist use of definite articles.

[158] In one very early case, three ears of wheat emerge from the wound itself in place of blood (V. 593).

[159] However the other animals that usually appear on these scenes, the dog, the raven, sometimes the lion, cannot be understood in this way.

[160] On this stereotype, see R.L. Gordon, A new Mithraic Relief from Rome, *Journal of Mithraic Studies* 1.2 (1976) 171 = Gordon 1996 no. VIIII.

are occasionally found reproduced in mithraea as independent votive statues or reliefs (Pl. 7).

Cumont was the first to offer a coherent narrative on the basis of the iconographic material, thus turning himself into the real mythographer of Mithras, and building up a picture of an entire theological system, whose principles can be rediscovered by means of the scientific method.[161] In the 1970s Cumont's entire reconstruction came under sharp criticism, a matter I come to later. At the moment I need only say that the following account, which essentially resumes Cumont, is extremely speculative.[162] Almost every statement that is not a straightforward description of an archaeological monument may well be mistaken.

Out of Chaos there emerged a god of Unlimited Time, identified with Aion, *Saeculum*, Kronos or Saturn, and sometimes as Fate or Destiny. This deity is represented as a winged male figure with a lion's head, encircled by the toils of a snake (Pl. 8). In his hands, he holds his attributes, a sceptre, a key or a thunderbolt. This primordial deity created heaven and earth, who then produced Ocean. A 'holy family' was thus produced, the supreme triad of the Mithraic pantheon. Heaven (Caelus) was equated with Zeus-Jupiter, who at some point received the thunderbolt from his father Kronos-Saturn, thanks to which he succeeded in establishing himself as supreme god, and then gave life to the other gods who live on Olympus (Pl. 6, left pilaster). Over against them was a dark world directed by Ahriman-Pluto, who, being likewise the son of Unlimited Time, was also brother to Caelus-Jupiter.[163]

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[161] See *TMMM* 1: 159ff. and 293ff., largely followed by Vermaseren 1963.

[162] There is a certain parallel between Cumont's methods and those of contemporary classical archaeologists such as Adolf Furtwängler (1853–1907), who aimed to reconstruct an 'archetype' (Classical Greek sculpture) by comparing as many surviving (Roman) copies as possible (cf. P. Rouet, *Approaches to the Study of Attic Vases: Beazley and Pottier* [Oxford 2001] 38f.). Cumont however came to believe he actually possessed the appropriate 'archetype', in the form of the Zoroastrian sacred books. A.H. Anquetil du Perron had of course published a translation of the *Avesta* in 1771, but it and many other texts were becoming available in a new English translation, still unreplaced, by E.W. West and his collaborators (including James Darmesteter) in the series *Sacred Books of the East*, nos. 6, 18, 24, 37 and 47, under the general editorship of F. Max Müller: *Pahlavi Texts* (5 vols., Oxford 1880–97). Though he was careful to use the more general term 'Mazdean', Cumont thus wrote Parthian, but more especially Sasanian and post-Sasanian Zoroastrian dualism straight back into the Roman evidence. Cumont also possessed a copy of Darmesteter's great French edition of the Avesta (1892–93), now kept as part of the library he left to the Belgian Academy at Rome.

[163] Cumont was heavily influenced here by J. Darmesteter's *Ohrmazd et Ahriman: leurs origines et leur histoire* (Paris 1877).

His troop of demonic beings, sometimes represented as snake-legged giants, tried to wrest the throne from Caelus-Jupiter, but were defeated and hurled back into the abyss from whence they had come (Pl. 9).[164] These demons have access to this world and are able to act negatively on human-beings and impel them to do wrong.

The basic means of purification are fire and water, represented by the lion and the crater that appear in many reliefs from Germania Superior and in the Danube provinces (Pl. 16, right of main scene).[165] They were considered divine elements, and thus played a central role in ritual. The winds too, since they were considered to have an influence on nature, were divine. The order of the cosmos, as I have said, was symbolised by the Sun driving his four-horsed chariot across the sky by day, and by the zodiaca signs, which allude to his annual path. If Sol was one of the most important Mithraic deities, his counterpart was Luna, who drives her *biga*, harnessed to two oxen, across the night-sky. Finally the planets, understood as a series of seven (i.e. including Sol and Luna), were believed to be the guardians (*tutelae*) of the initiatory grades.

The god who established himself in the Roman period at the centre of this system of belief was originally an Indo-European divinity. In the *Rg-Veda* (where the form of the name is Mitra) it is his duty, alongside Varuna, to maintain the order of the cosmos and to watch over the moral behaviour of mankind. The earliest documentary evidence for him (also in company with Varuna) occurs in a cuneiform treaty between King Suppiluliuma of Hatti and Shattiwaza/Kurtiwaza who was king of what was at that time the puppet-state of the Mitanni.[166] In Iran, his proper sphere was the social order: contracts, treaties, marriage, friendship and so on. He was a judge, and the terrible mailed fist of justice; he was the light that precedes the sunrise, but also day-light *tout court*; fire became his emblem because it was carried before him; he was lord of animal sacrifice and of the rain that causes seeds to germinate and plants to grow. All this is known from *Yašt* 10 of the Persian Old Avesta, the hymn to Miθra (the Avestan form of the name). Composed

[164] Cf. Turcan 1988, 247f.

[165] Cf. Turcan 2004. A third purificatory element, as we shall see, is honey, associated with τὰ λεοντικά, initiation into the important grade of *Leo*, Lion (Porphyry, *De antro* 15).

[166] Cf. P. Thieme, The 'Aryan' Gods of the Mitanni Treaties, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 80 (1960) 301–17. The treaty exists in two versions, dated by A. Götze, The Struggle for the Domination of Syria, 1400–1300 B.C., in *CAH*³ 2.2 (1975) [1965] 19, to the final phase of Suppiluliuma's reign i.e. 1347–6 BC.

in the fifth century BC, i.e. during the Achaemenid period, the hymn is full of bloodthirsty descriptions of the ghastly punishments dealt out to the wicked by Miθra.[167] The festival of this Iranian god was the Mithrakana, one of the great feasts both of the Achaemenid court and in the rest of the empire, celebrated at the autumnal equinox. After the military conquest of the Achaemenid Empire by Alexander, the cult of Miθra survived only at scattered sites in Anatolia and Armenia (and of course farther East). Two such areas from which we have evidence are the kingdoms of Pontus and Commagene, some of whose kings were named Mithradates *vel sim.*,[168] while theophoric names in Mithr- are relatively common all over Anatolia.[169] It is nevertheless impossible on present evidence to trace much if any direct continuity between the Achaemenid, or more vaguely Iranian, cult and the Roman one.[170] But

[167] The standard edition is Gershevitch 1959, with an excellent Introduction; extensive coverage of Indian and Iranian Mitra/Miθra in Hinnells 1975b; in Iran alone: M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, 1[3]: *The Early Period*. Handbuch der Orientalistik I.8.1.2 (Leyden 1996); a simplified account in Merkelbach 1984, 9–39.

[168] E.g. Diodorus Siculus 31.19.7 (Mithridates), 19.22 (Mithrobouzanes). The founder of the dynasty was Mithradates of Cius, cf. J.G.F. Hind, Mithridates, *CAH*[2] 9 (1994) 130–33. A remote relative of the Kings of Pontus and Cappadocia was the Mithradates of Pergamum who assisted Julius Caesar in Alexandria in March 47 BC: Josephus, *AJ* 14.127–36; *BJ* 1.187–93.

[169] See e.g. L. Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Personennamen* (Prague 1964); R. Schmitt, Iranische Personennamen auf griechischen Inschriften, in *Actes du VII[e] congrès international d'épigraphie* (Bucharest-Paris 1979) 137–52; M. Alram, *Nomina propria iranica in nummis. Materialgrundlage zu den iranischen Personennamen auf antiken Münzen*. Das iranische Personennamenbuch 4 (Vienna 1986); R. Schmitt, Iraniernamen in den Schriften Xenophons. Iranica Graeca Vetustiora 2 (Vienna 2002).

[170] As is well-known, Cumont postulated a direct translation of the Iranian cult, albeit syncretised with astrology, into the Roman world. Apart from Vermaseren 1963, the most Cumontian account is the earliest version of Turcan 2000 (ed.[1] in the Que sais-je? series, 1981a). A few years earlier Turcan could even write: "Mais d'où Numénius tenait-il que Mithra était démiurge? Nulle part dans la littérature mazdéenne il ne joue ce rôle" (1975, 78). (Turcan 1992a, 193–241 reveals considerable modification of his earlier views.) There have however been many alternative suggestions, of which we may mention G. Widengren, The Mithraic Mysteries in the Graeco-Roman World with special regard to their Iranian Background, in AA.VV., *La Persia e il mondo greco-romano*. Accademia Naz. dei Lincei (Rome 1966) 433–55; idem, Bābakīyah and the Mithraic Mysteries, in Bianchi 1979, 675–696 (much waving of the now meaningless Dumézilian wand); A.D.H. Bivar, *The Personalities of Mithra: Archaeology and Literature* (New York 1998), J.R. Russell, On the Armeno-Iranian Roots of Mithraism, in Hinnells 1975b, 173–82 and M. Boyce and J. Granet, *A History of Zoroastrianism, 3: Zorastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule* (Leyden 1991). On the sacred sites founded by Antiochus of Commagene, cf. J. Wagner, Dynastie und Herrscherkult in Kommagene: Forschungsgeschichte und Neuere Funde, *MDAI(I)* 33 (1983) 177–224; J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *Iran und Griechenland in der Kommagene* (Constance 1984); H. Waldmann, *Der kommagenische Mazdaismus*, *MDAI(I) Beiheft* 37 (Tübingen 1991); D.H. Sanders (ed.), *Nemrud-Dağı: The*

it is worth remarking that by the first century BC Mithras had become identified both in western Parthia and in Bactria with the Sun itself, who sees all (form: Mihr), which would parallel what seems to have happened independently in Hellenistic Anatolia.[171]

Both literary accounts and the iconography tell us that Mithras was miraculously born from a rock.[172] The young hero, as a boy or even a baby, emerges from the rock already dressed in his Phrygian cap, to connote his 'oriental' origin, and carrying in one hand a lighted torch and in the other a sword or dagger. The flame of the torch stamps him as a solar deity, and as giver of light; the sword is the instrument by means of which he bestows life through the death of the bull.[173] The birth-scene thus anticipates his two crucial roles, as giver of light and life. On one unusual birth-scene, from modern Vetren in Bulgaria, shows the rock-birth framed by the torchbearers and Sol and Luna, exactly as in a tauroctony, which may be similar kind of proleptic device.[174] The myth can in this sense be said to be recursive. It is consistent with this that the rock is not only the world but also the universe, recalling the cave where the death of the bull takes place.

The birth of Mithras from the rock is the commonest of all Mithraic scenes after the bull-killing. The fact that his birth brings light seems to fit with the hypothesis of a Mithraic cosmogonic narrative.[175] In

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Hierothesion of Antiochus I of Commagene. Results of the American Excavations directed by Theresa B. Goell, 2 vols. (Winona Lake, Ind. 1995–6); J. Wagner (ed.), *Gottkönige am Euphrat: Neue Ausgrabungen und Forschungen in Kommagene* (Mainz 2000). On the supposed Mithraic pirates, see now C. Rubino, Pompeyo Magno, los piratas cilicios y la introducción del Mitraismo en el Imperio romano según Plutarco, *Latomus* 65 (2006) 915–27.

[171] Parthia: Strabo 15.3.13, 732C. A. Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom* (Cambridge 1974) 139–41, suggested that the source was Apollodorus of Artemita (I^a), who was himself a native of Parthia; Bactria (the coinage of the Kuşan kingdom): Gnoli 1979, 730–34.

[172] No pagan source mentions the rock-birth, but several Christian writers, for what they are worth, allude briefly to it, e.g. Justin, *Dial. Tryph.* 70.1; Commodian, *Instr.* 1.13 (acrostic); Firmicus Maternus, *De errore* 20.1; Johannes Lydus, *De mens.* 3.26. Vermaseren 1951 is still the best discussion; more briefly, Merkelbach 1984, 96–98.

[173] Mithras once holds a handful of wheat in his hand instead of a torch (Schwertheim 1974, 17 no. 11a, mithraeum II at Cologne), just as the bull sometimes has one or more ears of wheat emerging from his tail *before* he is killed. These are of course variants of the 'synoptic' views common in didactic art, where the desire to instruct shoulders the rules of naturalism aside.

[174] Clauss 2000, 64 citing N. Gisdova, Ex-voto dédié à Mithra découvert récemment au village de Vetren, arr. Pazardjik, *Archéologie* (Sofia) 3 (1961) 50f.

[175] Cf. Guarducci 1979, 158f. in the context of V. 498. Flames occasionally emerge from the rock at the birth, e.g. in the cult-niche fresco of Dura-Europos, mithraeum III (V. 42 no. 5) and on the panelled relief from Nersae/Nesce, V. 650 L3. The precise sequence of events is wholly opaque, however. The later promotion of (Zeus Helios)

mithraeum III at Poetovio in Pannonia Superior was found a mid-third century altar with a representation of Mithras born from the rock, and being helped out, or supported, by two figures who are clearly Cautes and Cautopates (Pl. 10).[176] Above them is the figure of an old man asleep, who must be Saturnus, being offered a crown by a Victory. This might represent Saturnus having a premonitory dream foretelling the birth of Mithras (Merkelbach 1984, 98; 118). But it might also be an attempt to indicate the passing of an era, in a hypothetical Mithraic chronography, according to which the reign of Saturn/Infinite Time gives way, or shall give way, to the reign of Mithras (one of whose epithets at Housesteads is *Saecularis*), a reign that grants victory over evil, and cosmic peace.[177] Another aspect of such a chronography would be the roles of Sol and Luna in producing an endless sequence of days and nights; of the planets, which in Mithraic iconography certainly sometimes represent the week-days (e.g. V. 693, Bologna); and of the zodiac, connoting the sequence of months that make up the solar year.[178] There can also be no doubt, as we saw in relation to the Trier rock-birth, that the sequence of the seasons was of central interest in the cult.[179] As for the future, there have been several attempts to imagine a Mithraic eschatology.[180]

Mithras as demiurge and kosmokrator seems to have overlaid an earlier version in which he was a mere hero and came into a world where, for example, Cautes and Cautopates already existed, as well as the sword with which he was to kill the bull.

[176] V. 1593 = Selem 1980, 131f. no. 92 = Merkelbach 1984, 376 fig. 140; cf. 1430 B3 = Merkelbach 367 fig. 131, from Virunum.

[177] V. 863f. with C.M. Daniels, Mithras *Saecularis*, the Housteads Mithraeum and a fragment from Carrawburgh, *ArchAel.* 40 (1962) 105–15.

[178] Among the verses at S. Prisca on the Aventine is the beginning of a description of the zodiacal sequence, *Primus [et] hic Aries astric[t]ius ordine currit*: Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965, 213 no. 13.

[179] On all these temporal sequences in the cult, cf. Beck 1988, 17f., 54f.; Ulansey 1989, 98–103.

[180] The Mithraic conception of time and its implications for eschatology was discussed à propos the discovery of the Phaethon scene of the Dieburg relief (V. 1247 = Schwertheim 1974, 160f. no. 123a Rückseite) by F. Cumont, La fin du monde selon les mages occidentaux, *RHR* 103 (1931) 29–96. Cumont linked the new monument with the Zoroastrian doctrine of the Frašegird and the metals of Celsus' 'ladder' (ap. Origen, *C. Celsum* 6.22). Gordon objected that Iranian eschatological ideas were unlikely to have been present in the cult at all—at any rate the presence of a Phaethon relief in a mithraeum was far too flimsy a basis for such a claim, for it completely ignored the interpretations of the myth of Phaethon current in the Roman world in II^{P} (1975, 237–44). Turcan argued that Celsus' ladder evokes the Platonic doctrine of the Great (Equinoctial) Cycle, a period of some 25,700 years. I incline to support Beck's view

In the case of the well-known representation of the rock-birth from the mithraeum at Housesteads on Hadrian's Wall, the god is shown as bursting out of an egg within a highly unusual, indeed unique, ovoid zodiac.[181] This is a clear allusion to the influence of Orphism on the cult in the third century AD, which is underscored by a roughly contemporary votive text in Greek of the same date from the Emporium area by the Tiber in Rome, where the god is addressed as Zeus Helios Mithras Phanes (V. 475 = *IGUR* 108).[182] By this period, at any rate, Mithras had become himself a demiurge and *kosmokrator*, just as Euboulus claimed he was (Porphyry, *De antro* 6). The point is confirmed by another Greek inscription from Trastevere in Rome, for many years lost and often considered a forgery, that has now surfaced in South Africa, and is certainly genuine. Mithras is there given the learned compound epithet ἀστροβροντοδαίμων, the god who is lord of the stars and of thunder.[183] The link between birth from a rock, control of the growing season and mastery of the kosmos is supplied by an important monument from the Altbachtal sacral area in Trier that shows a baby Mithras, with one hand supporting a zodiacal circle with the six spring and summer signs and holding a large globe (the universe) with the other.[184] The pediment above represents, among other things, the order of heaven.

It has been argued that the myth contained a second or doublet version of the birth of Mithras (e.g. Merkelbach 1984, 99f.). This view is mainly based on an image on the complex relief from Heddernheim (Frankfurt a.M.), where Mithras' head and shoulders emerge out of a tree.[185] Analogous, though slightly different, representations are known from Syria: at Dura-Europos Mithras is clearly a baby, and naked; and at Hawarte (late fourth century AD), he is actually stepping from out

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that there is no reason why the doctrine of the soul's celestial journey should not have been Mithraic as well as neo-Platonic (1988, 81f.; 1994, 29; 2006, 44–50).

[181] Cf. G. Ristow, Zum Kosmokrator im Zodiakus: Ein Bildvergleich, in de Boer and Edridge 1978, 985–87.

[182] Phanes was the Orphic divinity of limitless light born from a cosmic egg, that is, the primal stone, the embryonic world subject to the influence of the constellations, cf F. Cumont, Mithra et l'Orphisme, *RHR* 109 (1934) 63–72 (still well worth reading); Guarducci 1979, 160–62; Jackson 1994.

[183] *IG* XIV 998 = *IGUR* 125 (omitted by V.), with Gordon 2006, 180–89. For another Greek text, V. 463.1 = *IGUR* 194a,b (mithraeum of the Antonine Baths), an acclamation to Zeus Helios Sarapis re-cut for Mithras, see p. 162 below.

[184] V. 985 = Schwertheim 1974, 229f. no. 190b, with Beck 1988, 39–42.

[185] V. 1083 = Schwertheim 1974, 67f. no. 59a A1.

of the branches.[186] It might appear as though a tree has simply been substituted for the rock. Nevertheless there is a clear difference between rock-birth and the tree-scenes: in the latter, Mithras has neither torch nor dagger; at Heddernheim he is dressed in his usual adult 'Persian' dress (which is why Cumont interpreted the scene as Mithras looking out for the bull). This implies that these are not birth-scenes—an iconography that in the Mithraic context is linked with light and the death of the bull—but representations of the special relationship between Mithras and growing things, especially plants of agricultural value.[187] Porphyry mentions that the grade Persian had a special responsibility as "guardian of plants", i.e. it represented or figured one of the god's essential roles (*De antro* 16).[188] In other words, these images on the reliefs have not so much a narrative function, as we have so far been assuming, but a didactic or mnemonic one. On the other hand, an unique detail on a recently-discovered relief now in the Israel Museum shows Mithras as a baby drinking juice from a bunch of grapes (Pl. 11).[189] Here the theme of the motherless, rock-born child has been fused with the theme of wine from the banquet scene, in order to answer a pressing question: how did new-born Mithras survive independently of women? At the same time, the drinking of unfermented grape-juice anticipates the mystery of the relation between the blood of the bull and the wine of the banquet of Mithras and Sol—and of the Mithraists who partook of the shared Mithraic meals.

The Heddernheim panel may also however help to solve the puzzle posed by a panel on the Dieburg relief (V. 1247), where three heads

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[186] Dura-Europus: V. 45 = Rostovtzeff et al. 1939, 111 with pl. XVIII.2 (fresco above the arcosolium, phase III c. AD 240); Hawarte: Gawlikowski 1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2001 [2004], 2007.

[187] Cf. already N. Turchi, *Le religioni misteriosofiche del mondo antico* (Rome 1923) 187; Vermaseren 1963, 62. Prümm 1943/1954 actually called Mithraism a 'Naturkult'. Cumont rightly compared the youthful Malakhbel emerging out of a sacred cypress carrying a sacrificial kid on his shoulders on the reverse of the Capitoline altar (= Helbig^4 2, 30 no. 1182 with a misleading interpretation heavily dependent on du Mesnil du Buisson = Schraudolph 1993, 236 Cat. no. L145 with pl. 41 top, central photo) but wrongly understood this as connoting 'the solar god born from a tree' rather than as a reference to Malakhbel's connection at Palmyra with the sacred wood (ap. Rostovtzeff 1939, 111f.). He later realised that a similar motif was also used for Syrian Dusares.

[188] Vermaseren 1963, 124; Merkelbach 1984, 29 n. 22.

[189] See De Jong 1997, 55 with fig. 2 on p. 56; Gordon 2001a, 101f.

in Phrygian caps are found together on a tree.[190] These must represent Mithras with Cautes and Cautopates alike as masters of nature, recalling the expression τριπλάσιος θεός, threefold god, used in relation to Mithras by pseudo-Dionysius, *Epist.* 7.2 (that is, sixth century AD). The identity of the torch-bearers is not easy to determine, for they seem to have different values depending on the narrative context and their iconographic position.[191] Sometimes, as we shall see, they are simply the servants of Mithras, such as when they carry the dead bull back from the cave to the site of the first sacrifice, boil up its flesh (Pl. 11, bottom left) or act as waiters at the feast of Sol and Mithras (Pl. 15).[192] Yet sometimes, as when they assist the birth of Mithras, they seem to pre-exist him; at other times, as when they drink the water he causes to gush out of the rock, they are the necessary witnesses of his miracles. In these roles they seem to have no obvious allegorical function. If we look at the tauroctony relief, however, we usually find Cautes on the spectator's left and Cautopates on the right of the main scene (Pl. 11). In these positions, they seem to represent the rising/morning and evening/setting sun, with Mithras, by implication, as the sun at midday.[193] When they are in these positions, Cautes is also beneath Sol (day) and Cautopates beneath Luna (night), suggesting a further significance or association—Cautes is in fact fairly often represented with a cock, Cautopates once or twice, most clearly on the larger relief from the mithraeum of Castra Peregrinorum on the Caelian in Rome, with an owl.[194] When their location is reversed, however, i.e. Cautopates on the

[190] Cf. also the analogous scene at Poetovio II, where a head emerges from each of three cypresses (V. 1510 = Selem 1980, 118f. no. 70c = Merkelbach 1984, 372 fig. 136 [good photo]).

[191] Cf. Hinnells 1976. The etymology of the two brothers' names seems to be Iranian, though the experts cannot agree upon a solution, and a Greek etymology has been seriously offered. *Kaut-* may be related to the idea of 'light', and the ending *pat-* signify 'opposite', so the original meaning (in Median) might have been something like 'Light' and 'Anti-light', cf. M. Schwartz, Cautes and Cautopates: the Mithraic Torchbearers, in Hinnells 1975b, 406–23.

[192] Carrying bull: V. 42.12 (Dura); carrying cauldron: de Jong 1997, 56f.; servants: V. 641 (Fiano Romano); 798 (Tróia, Setúbal); 988 = Schwertheim 1974, 239f. no. 206 (Trier), cf. 635b (Rome).

[193] At Stockstadt II (Germania Sup.), they are associated respectively with East and West (V. 1212–14 = Schwertheim 1974, 148 nos. 117b and c). Kellens 1979, 716 observes that the 'arms' of Avestan Miθra twice connote sunrise and sunset, and raises the possibility that this was the torchbearers' 'original' nature, whatever quite that would mean.

[194] Cock: Merkelbach 1984, 121f.; owl: ibid. 110, though as usual many of his supposed cases are imaginary.

spectator's left, Cautes on the right, as in about a quarter of all cases, a phenomenon that mainly occurs in the Danube area, they seem to connote the two seasons, Spring and Autumn (Pls. 6, 16).

On an important monument from mithraeum III at Heddernheim/Frankfurt, Cautes is further associated with Caelus, Heaven, and Cautopates with Oceanus.[195] This suggests that the torch-bearers might also be identified with the opposition between life and death. This is the direction that Roger Beck in particular has pushed the analysis. He has argued that yet another role of the twin torch-bearers is as the agents of Mithras who are linked with the gates through which the souls descend into the world of genesis and re-ascend into immortality: according to Porphyry, *De antro* 24 (= Sanzi 2003, 422: Mithras no. 8.7), Cautopates is linked to North, cold and the genesis of souls, Cautes to South, heat and the apogenesis (release) of souls.[196] In these roles, they seem to represent, with Mithras, a sort of unexpected trinity, which may be the deeper significance of the panels at Dieburg and Poetovio. It is moreover certain, as I have mentioned, that the torch-bearers were considered gods of the kind one could make vows to in the expectation of receiving aid, and there are many named statues of them as gods in their own right.

The central Mithraic narrative however focused on Mithras and the bull. The bull itself seems to have come from the Moon (Luna, as a planet, is the diurnal and nocturnal 'house' of Taurus, just as Sol is of Leo). The complex reliefs show a tangled sequence of events that include Mithras wrestling with the bull in order to overpower it, Mithras being carried off by the bull, clinging to its horns, Mithras riding the bull (Pl. 12), and Mithras dragging the bull by its hind-legs (Pls. 7; 11 bottom right), in the manner often found on Roman sacrificial scenes of smaller animals—only Mithras can drag a full-grown bull in this manner.[197] Appropriately for a rite of passage, these may be read as

[195] V. 1127 = Schwertheim 1974, 81 no. 61c. This may however simply be because they are two sets of brothers.

[196] Beck 1988, 93–95; 1994; 2000, 158–60; 2006, 107–12. He combines this with the apparent paradox that souls came into genesis through Cancer (summer solstice but the northern tropic) and left it (*apogenesis*) through Capricorn (winter solstice but the southern tropic).

[197] Merkelbach claims that this scene represents an initiate carrying the dead bull (1984, 343; 355; 358), despite the fact that the position of the tail and the forelegs make it quite clear that the bull is still alive. This is just one of hundreds of reckless hypotheses that make it necessary to use Merkelbach's book with great caution, despite

allegories of the tests that human-beings have to overcome. A statue of Mithras in this pose at Mithraeum I, Poetovio (Ptuj, Slovenia), is labelled *Transitu(m)*, i.e. (a statue of) the 'Transition', from which we get a good impression of the effort required by the god to achieve his goal (Pl. 7).[198]

A raven gives Mithras a message from Helios/Sol that he should kill the roaming bull.[199] He faithfully fulfils this task, as the tauroctony shows (Pl. 6).[200] The scene has been interpreted as the moment of creation of all beneficial things, which makes Mithras into a true creator god. Indeed, Porphyry describes him explicitly as τοῦ πάντων ποιητοῦ καὶ πατρὸς Μίθρου, Mithras the creator and father of everything (*De antro* 6 = Sanzi 2003, 419: Mithras no. 8.3). And a little later on, in an obscure passage, he describes Mithras as δημιουργός… καὶ γενέσεως δεσπότης, demiurge and lord of generation (*De antro* 24 = Sanzi p. 422 no. 8.7). The images that show Mithras carrying a globe in his hand confirm this claim.[201] Cumont rather unconvincingly thought that the spirit of evil vainly sent poisonous creatures (the scorpion, the snake) to thwart Mithras' exploit.[202] However that may be, there can be no doubt of the total success of his mission, or that the killing of the bull was for

its excellent photos; see the reviews by R. Turcan, *Gnomon* 58 (1986) 394–99 and R.L. Beck, *Phoenix* 41 (1987) 296–316.

[198] V. 1494 = Merkelbach 1984, 369 fig. 133. The inscription is *CIL* III 14354[28] = *ILS* 4246.

[199] The raven has the function of a messenger in many different cultures, cf. J. Alvar, Matériaux pour l'étude de la formule *sive deus sive dea*, *Numen* 32 (1985) 236–73 at 253f.

[200] Cumont believed that he did so against his own will: "Mithra remplit à contre-coeur cette mission cruelle", *TMMM* 1: 303. The claim does not seem very plausible, particularly since in many cases he *does* look towards the wound or the bull's muzzle.

[201] Cf. V. 334 = Merkelbach 1984, 298 fig. 42 (Altieri relief); V. 985 = Schwertheim 1974, 229f. no. 190b (Trier), with Turcan 1975, 78 n. 127; 85 n. 172. The same interpretation could be offered of the scene in which Mithras seems to substitute for Atlas in bearing the cosmos on his shoulders, which is only represented in V. 1283 = Schwertheim 1974, 184f. no. 141a scene 1 (Neuenheim) [it is not certain that V. 1292 = Schwertheim 1974, 192f. no. 148, L2 (Osterburken, see Pl. 6 here) represents the same idea], where he not only supports the world but is a genuine kosmokrator, cf. Clauss 2000, 87 with fig. 53. We might also cite V. 390 R2 in this connection, where Mithras stands in a curious pose between two cypress trees, one hand raised towards an arc, one lowered, which he identifies as Mithras kosmokrator. Richard Gordon suggests to me it may represent Mithras tracing the ecliptic as he stands on the line of the equinoxes, the meeting-points of the ecliptic and the celestial equator (cf. V. 1510 scene 3 = Merkelbach 1984, 372 fig. 136: 'Mithras separating heaven and earth', Poetovio II). This would amount to the same general significance.

[202] The problems with this theory are outlined in Hinnells 1975a.

Mithraists the central fact in the history of mankind; and that is the reason why it enjoys a privileged place in all mithraea.[203]

According to Cumont, Mithras had even before this managed on several occasions to scupper Ahriman's efforts to destroy mankind. On one occasion Ahriman caused such a terrible drought that his rival was obliged to intervene by firing an arrow at a rock or cliff; pure water came gushing out, thus saving those under his protection and making him into a god of waters. This motif was especially attractive to his worshippers on the Rhine-Danube frontier.[204] Thanks to one of the texts from the Santa Prisca mithraeum at Rome, published in 1965, the matter is now however understood quite differently. On a mid-third century altar from mithraeum III at Poetovio in Pannonia Superior, Cautes and Cautopates are clearly visible with Mithras as he fires his arrow (Pl. 13).[205] This must remind us of S. Prisca line no. 4: *fons concluse petris qui [g]eminos aluisti ne[c]ta[re fr]at[re]s*, "O rock-bound spring, which fed the twin brothers with nectar".[206] There is no hint here of a symbolic reading of an element necessary to save people suffering from drought. If we consider that the 'water-miracle' is Mithras' first act after his birth, it may be that it is to be connected with Mithraic cosmogony: after the ordering of the cosmos and the growth of plants, he creates water from a miraculous spring, in the company of the same beings who attended his birth. That would have the advantage of integrating narrative, iconography and symbolism. For our present purposes it hardly matters whether the claim that the gushing water had the same divine qualities as the nectar that grants immortality to those who drink it was original or was only developed later.[207] C. Aelius Anicetus and his son

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[203] Cumont, *TMMM* I 188; 305. The recent discovery of the late fourth-century AD paintings of the mithraeum at Huarte/Hawarte near Apamea in Syria has now proved that the theme of evil was present in the cult (see p. 196 below).

[204] Cf. Vermaseren 1963, 72; Turcan 1992a, 217; 2000, 56.

[205] V. 1584 = Selem 1980, 130 no. 91 = Merkelbach 1984, 374 fig. 138 (right-hand photo).

[206] Vermaseren and van Essen 1965, 193 = Sanzi 2003, 439: Mithras 26.1; Merkelbach 1984, 113. The reading of this line, like almost all the others at S. Prisca, could be made to appear much more doubtful than I have suggested by means of the square brackets. This is mainly due to the way that Vermaseren presented them. Almost every letter should in fact be dotted to represent guesswork. The reader must be warned that they are almost always reprinted (e.g. by Sanzi) in a very misleadingly sanitised manner.

[207] The parallel with *Exodus* 17.3–6, where Moses causes water to gush from a rock, which was later reinterpreted as the source of eternal life, has often been noted, cf. Merkelbach 1984, 114; Clauss 2000, 72.

dedicated an altar at Aquicum (Budapest) where the torch-bearers flank neither the tauroctony nor the rock-birth but a large krater, evidently a symbolic substitute for the value of those scenes (V. 1765). Manfred Clauss suggested that it contains the water from the rock (2000, 74), but several monuments imply rather that it contains the blood of the bull, drained at the sacrifice and collected in this vessel.[208] It may even be that it was also held in a sense to contain the bull's semen, or at least its fertilising power. In any case, there can be no doubt that the krater and its contents are among the key symbolic operators in Mithraism, full of connotations and allusions, and that they deserve more attention than has been accorded them up to now.[209]

The nectar that feeds the twins may even be identical to the 'shed blood', *sanguine fuso*, mentioned by line 14 at Santa Prisca. The miracle of the water would on this reading have the same symbolic value as the blood and the semen, as the liquid that gushes from the *fons perennis*, which Clauss has perceptively identified as Mithras himself (2000, 72). But that is not all. Porphyry states that the Mithraic krater symbolises the spring, which must be the spring of the myth: παρὰ τῷ Μίθρᾳ ὁ κρατὴρ ἀντὶ τῆς πηγῆς τέτακται (*De antro* 17 = Sanzi 2003, 421: Mithras 8.5). If so, we may take it that the krater in the tauroctony symbolises the 'water-miracle', which would thus assume its true cosmogonic role, not as an episode in a supposed 'biography' of Mithras but as an authentic commemoration of the creation of water, taken as a symbol for all life-giving fluids.

This symbolism however also has a soteriological dimension. Here we are forced to rely on the rather convoluted argument of Porphyry's neo-Platonist exposition of the Cave of the Nymphs in *Odyssey* Bk. 13.103–12. He first points out that souls coming into being are moist and that blood is welcome to them, just as we give plants water (*De antro* 10). Moreover, the nectar that comes from the spring, or its hypostasis, the

[208] There is admittedly no incontrovertible evidence that the krater contained the blood, but its position on a number of Rhine-Danube monuments, such as the Brigetio plaque (V. 1727) suggests as much. The fact that the snake often seems to be drinking from it (e.g. V. 1306 = Schwertheim 1974, 203 no. 161, Fellbach nr. Stuttgart) rather than directly from the wound (as on e.g. V. 75 = Merkelbach 1984, 279 fig. 18, Sidon) surely strengthens the inference that the krater contains the same substance that the snake feeds on when it leaps up to the dying bull.

[209] Cf. Gordon 1998, 235, distinguishing between at least two different Mithraic vessels, as well as between their ritual and their symbolic connotations. There can however be no question that the primary content of the Mithraic krater is wine, whatever symbolic or mythical meanings that liquid was given.

krater, is the liquid of coming-into-being.[210] However, he then encounters a difficulty, for Homer says that the kraters and amphoras in the cave were full not of water but of comb-honey (*Odyssey* 13.105f. ~ *De antro* 15).[211] To account for this, he claims that the bees have deposited their honey in the Nymphs' cave as a source of incorruptibility; it is in this connection that he mentions the role of honey in the purification of initiates into the Mithraic grade *Leo*, since the initiate has to reject water because it is hostile to fire. Mention of the Lions reminds him of the grade *Perses*, Persian, whose initiates also underwent a ritual involving honey, but here the symbolism was different, for it signified τὸ φυλακτικόν, their role as protectors of fruits and harvests. Moving rapidly on in this ceaseless chain of associations and assimilations, Porphyry then observes that if honey is connected with the preservation of living things it is also connected to their procreation and generation, for which water too is required. He can thus triumphantly explain why Homer's bees should build their combs in kraters and amphoras, which are 'really' symbols of springs and fountains (*De antro* 17) and connect these with coming-into-being and going-out-of-being.

It is quite uncertain how much of all this we may take to be part of the Mithraic system of beliefs. But perhaps we can say that, Mithras having established himself as demiurge at his birth, his world was empty of life. In order to create a natural cycle he had to do two things: introduce water (fluids) and establish plant-life. The first is depicted in the scene of the 'water-miracle', the second in the tauroctony (Pl. 14). When that had been done, the process once begun acquired a secondary or additional resonance: the primary fluid, water, mingled symbolically with the bull's blood/seminal fluid, the medium through which human souls came into being and could enjoy salvation, and with honey, symbolizing incorruptibility, symbol of eternity. All three (or four) fluids are thus present in the krater, which itself can thus symbolise both the birth of Mithras and the tauroctony.

I would indeed be tempted to go further in this sub-Porphyrian vein and link all this with the motif of three-fold Mithras. I have already

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[210] In §13 he equates kraters and amphoras, as Homer seems to, an identification he repeats in §17. That being the case, the fact that in §15 he speaks only of amphoras does not disturb me.

[211] On Porphyry's allegorical method and arguments, see F. Buffière, *Les mythes d'Homère* (Paris 1956); R. Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegory and the Growth of the Epic Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1989).

mentioned that the primary means of purification were fire and water, which form a pair like Cautes and Cautopates. Through the detail about the Lions, we can establish a further connection between fire and honey. The krater, which contains all these, would thus, just like the Mithraic cave, contain the solar trinity of Mithras, Cautes and Cautopates (who certainly formed some kind of unity, as the Dieburg tree attests), as well as the three life-giving fluids, blood, water and honey. Connotations of this kind surely explain the apparently odd reference in an inscription from Pax Iulia (Beja, Portugal) by a *sodalicium* of Bracaraugustans to a *st[u]dium cum cratera*, a meeting-house with a krater.[212] My discussion of the wider importance of the Mithraic krater should settle doubts about its Mithraic provenance; I would indeed claim that we have here a documentary corroboration of the importance of that vessel in Mithraic ritual.

Cumont grouped other events with the water-miracle as showing the hostility of Ahriman, the principle of negativity, and the saving power of Mithras. He thought, for example, that the god had saved mankind from massive floods and fires, and that the human race had thus been able to recover demographically and populate the earth under the protection of its tutelary god (*TMMM* I 306). This aspect however received minimal attention in Mithraism, since, as A.D. Nock observed, "Mithras had no erotic mythology" (1937, 112), and women were excluded from the cult.

Having established a world safe for mortals, Mithras could end his mission on earth. To celebrate this, he arranged for a farewell feast with himself and Helios as guests of honour, attended by Cautes and Cautopates (Pl. 15). When they had eaten, the two friends mounted Helios' quadriga, which carried them up to the abode of the gods, where Mithras took his place as the protector of his faithful followers (Pls. 6, right pilaster, 5 panels from bottom; 16, lower register).

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[212] V. 801bis = *AE* 1984: 465, where doubts are expressed about its Mithraic provenance, reinforced by J. d'Encarnaçâo, *Trabalhos de Arqueologia do Sol* 1 (1986) 104 no. 339. Some of his points have been discussed by J.M. Garcia, *Religiões Antigas de Portugal* 1991, 450f. no. 463; cf. J.C. Edmondson, Mithras at Pax Iulia—a Re-examination, *Conimbriga* 23 (1978) 69–86. I think there are one or two analogies with the inscription from S. Gemini in Umbria published by Ciotti 1978, where the *Leones* have a *leonteum cum signo et cetero cultu exornatum*. The first word, a 'lion-place', enables us to infer the character of the Bracaraugustan *st[u]dium*; the remainder would be the equivalent of our *cum cratera*. Moreover—and this is very important—the relief from Tróia (Setúbal: V. 798) shows a large crater at the centre of the banquet of Mithras and Helios, which is the mythical exemplar or prototype of the regular ritual institution in the cult.

In broad outlines, this is the canonical reconstruction established by Cumont, with the necessary provisos (and some digressions). As I have already mentioned, however, much of it is now considered questionable. The first overall criticism was by Richard Gordon, at a time when Mithraic studies had developed sufficiently to risk alternatives to the Cumontian edifice, then seventy years old.[213] The most enduring gain of this criticism was the decoupling of Roman Mithraism from the 'Hellenised magi' who, on the model of Isiac cult, were supposed to have spread a genuinely Iranian cult around the Mediterranean.[214] Some scholars then suggested a still more radical interpretation, which viewed the cult as a Roman creation, with no more substantial link to the Persian background than the name of the god.[215] The second gain was to reconsider the influence of neo-Platonist interpretation on some of the key ancient literary texts that tell us something about the cult, which has been the particular merit of Robert Turcan.[216] Thirdly, it was now possible to examine the iconography without the distortions introduced by Cumont's Iranising spectacles, and set it into its natural Hellenistic-Roman context.[217]

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[213] Gordon 1975. The first Mithraic Congress was held in Manchester in 1971; it is important to remember that just a few years before L.A. Campbell had published a far more completely Iranising interpretation of Mithraic iconography than Cumont had ever attempted, based on the Zoroastrian opposition between *menog* (the spiritual realm) and *getig* (the finite world) (Campbell 1968). It is now wholly forgotten except by those who, knowing nothing of more recent research on the cult, come across it on a library shelf.

[214] On the knowledge of Iranian religion, and in particular of the magi, shown by Classical authors, see the solid work of A. de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature*. RGRW 133 (Leyden 1997). The uncoupling of the Roman cult from the Iranian magi must be right, but we lack an analysis of Porphyry's (i.e. Euboulus and Pallas') attribution of the first mithraeum to Zoroaster. There is not a single epigraphic or other reference to Zoroaster in the western evidence, yet these authors, and Firmicus Maternus (see below), found such traditions somewhere.

[215] Vermaseren came round to this view, with some reservations, in M.J. Vermaseren 1981a, apparently under the influence of R. Merkelbach, whose version of it only appeared somewhat later (1984, 153–61). Its main proponent is now Manfred Clauss (2000, 7f., 21f.).

[216] Turcan 1975. Note however the criticisms of P. Athanassiadi, A Contribution to Mithraic Theology: The Emperor Julian's *Hymn to King Helios*, *JThS* 28 (1977) 360–71, though she has since retracted her view that Julian was to any significant extent influenced by Mithraism.

[217] Cf. Hinnells 1975a; 1976. R. Vollkommer, Mithras Tauroctonus. Studien zu einer Typologie der Stieropferszene auf Mithrasbildwerken, *MEFRA* 103 (1991) 265–81 has proposed a typology that includes the major transformations over time, though his premises are quite unacceptable. He is also responsible for the unhelpful and confusing entry s.v. Mithras, in *LIMC* 6 (1992) 583–626.

The fourth result was the partial abandonment of Cumont's narrative approach in favour of an astrological interpretation of the tauroctony. It came to be widely believed that the iconography had a solely allegorical value, and could be read as a star-map of some sector of the heavens, thus providing supposedly privileged insight into the world of Mithraic beliefs. But before I discuss the implications of this revolutionary interpretation, I would just like to mention that yet another new line of possible interpretation has been opened up by recent work on two Kurdish sects, Ahl-e Haqq and Yezidi: a central feature of their cosmogonies, which seem to be pre-Zoroastrian, is the killing of a bull by Mithras.[218] If this line could be pursued, it might support the hypothesis of Elmar Schwertheim and Roger Beck that the cult originated in the area of Commagene/North Syria or at least from eastern Anatolia.[219]

The idea that the tauroctony might be a kind of star-map goes back ultimately to the late-antique scholiast on Statius, Lactantius Placidus. Proximately, however, it was developed first by the well-known French Enlightenment figure Charles-François Dupuis (1742–1809), an outstanding champion of revolutionary principles and anti-clerical thinking (he published under the name 'Dupuis, citoyen françois'). In 1795 Dupuis published a vast work in seven volumes, plus a volume of plates, entitled *Origine de tous les cults, ou religion universelle*, where he propounded the theory that all myths were basically astronomical.[220] As was usual in his day, Dupuis treated all solar divinities as essentially the same, but gave a privileged position among them to Mithras. He explained the tauroctony as representing Sol at the equinox in Taurus, an allegory of the triumph of spring over winter.[221] Without knowing

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[218] P.G. Kreyenbroek, Mithra and Ahreman in Iranian cosmogonies, in Hinnells 1994, 173–82. The Yezidis have recently been in the news, as the victims of bomb-attacks upon their settlements in N. Iraq.

[219] Schwertheim 1974, 18; Beck 1988 (mainly fuelled by his interest in 'star-talk'). Both, as Beck oberves, were of course in fact picking up one of Cumont's later suggestions.

[220] Note already his *Mémoire sur l'origine des constellations, et sur l'explication de la fable, par le moyen de l'astronomie* (Paris 1781). He later published a condensed version, *Abrégé de l'origine de tous les cultes* (Paris 1798; 1822[3]), which nevertheless still occupied 597 pp.

[221] Only two modern scholars have discussed Dupuis in relation to the mysteries of Mithras: Smith 1990 and, at considerable length, Swerdlow 1991. In fact, however, he was only extending an astral interpretation of Mithras that was quite standard in Late-Renaissance accounts, all of which started with the muddled information of Lactantius Placidus, on Statius, *Thebaid* 1.717–20, cf. R.L. Gordon, Interpreting Mithras in the Late Renaissance, 1: the 'monument of Ottaviano Zeno' (V. 335) in Antonio

Dupuis' work, Karl Bernhard Stark (1824–79), a prolific author, whose important *Systematik und Geschichte der Archäologie der Kunst*, the first volume of a projected Handbuch der Archäologie der Kunst, appeared only posthumously in 1880, suggested a thorough-going astral interpretation of three fragmentary reliefs found at Dormagen on the Rhine. However, his views were sharply criticised by Cumont, flush with the authority given him by the new armoury of scientific history, and the entire discussion was dropped.[222] This is hardly surprising given the dominance in the early twentieth century both of historicist explanations and, in this field, of Cumont's views. The idea was only revived as part of the anti-Cumontian wave beginning in the 1970s.

The basic idea, as Dupuis already argued, is that the tauroctony is not the culminating point of a mythical narrative but the representation of a moment in the star-strewn sky from which all the possible cosmogonic and soteriological claims of Mithraism could be deduced. The textual basis for such a symbolic account of the tauroctony could indeed be found in Porphyry:

> For Euboulus tells us that Zoroaster was the first to dedicate a natural cave in honour of Mithras, the creator and father of all (εἰς τιμὴν τοῦ πάντων ποιητοῦ καὶ πατρὸς Μίθρου).... This cave bore for him the image of the cosmos that Mithras had created (εἰκόνα φέροντος αὐτῷ τοῦ σπηλαίου τοῦ κόσμου, ὅν ὁ Μίθρας ἐδημιούργησε), and the things that the cave contained, by their proportionate arrangement, provided him with symbols of the elements and climates of the cosmos. So after this Zoroaster the custom prevailed among others too of conducting the initiations in caverns and caves whether natural or artificial (μετὰ δὲ τοῦτον τὸν Ζωροάστρην κρατήσαντος καὶ παρὰ τοῖς ἄλλοις, δι' ἄντρων καὶ σπηλαίων εἴτ' οὖν αὐτοφυῶν εἴτε χειροποιήτων τὰς τελετὰς ἀποδιδόναι).
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> Porphyry, *De antro* 6 = Sanzi 2003, 419: Mithras 8.3[223]

Elsewhere he tells us that Mithras' proper position is on the equinoxes (τῷ μὲν οὖν Μίθρᾳ οἰκείαν καθέδραν τὴν κατὰ τὰς ἰσημερίας

Lafreri's *Speculum Romanae magnificentiae* (1564), available only in electronic form on the Web at *EJMS* 4 (2004).

[222] K.B. Stark, Die Mithrassteine von Dormagen, *Jahrbücher des Vereins von Altertumsfreunden im Rheinlande* 46 (1869) 1–25; cf. his *Zwei Mithraeen der Großherzoglichen Alterthümersammlung* (Heidelberg 1865), the first publication of the Osterburken relief (pl. 6 here); Cumont, *TMMM* 1: 202; 2: 387. The remains in question, V. 1011–16 = Schwertheim 1974, 11ff. no. 8, had been found already in 1821.

[223] Included by des Places as a doubtful fragment of Numenius (frg. 60).

ὑπέταξαν), a claim that has caused a good deal of disagreement among the proponents of an astral reading.[224]

At the Mithraic conference in Teheran in 1974, the Yale Iranist Stanley Insler, working quite independently of Roger Beck, read a paper that linked an astral reading of the tauroctony with an iteration of Cumont's claim that the mysteries had originated in Iran (Insler 1978). He understood the death of the bull as marking the end of winter and the approach of summer, an opposition he argued is also to be found in the Avesta. This does not seem a very telling parallel, but he also argued that the configuration of the constellations represented in the icon suggested a date in April. On the assumption that the great Iranian festival of Miθra, the Mithragān, was celebrated on 16th of the 7th month of the old Iranian calendar (whose details are however very obscure), he arrived at the conclusion that in the first century BC it must have been celebrated in mid-April. Originally, then, the Mithraic icon celebrated the date of the Mithragān, which was also the traditional date of the beginning of spring in Roman peasant calendars.[225] This reading produced a stir at the conference, since it seemed to offer a way of recuperating a version of Cumont's story.

In fact Roger Beck had already given a paper at the APA meeting in December 1973 identifying, like Insler, all the elements of the tauroctony with specific constellations on or near a particular stretch of the ecliptic: the bull is Taurus, the dog Canis major, the snake Hydria, the raven Corvus, the scorpion Scorpius, the torch-bearers Gemini, the ear at the end of the bull's tail Spica. The lion that in the Rhine-Danube area often appears below the bull is Leo, and the krater near him is Krater (Text fig. 3). The implication of this reading would be that Mithras is closely linked to the constellation Leo, which is both the diurnal and nocturnal House of the Sun.[226]

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[224] *De antro* 24 = Sanzi 2003, 422: Mithras 8.7; cf. R.L. Beck, The seat of Mithras at the equinoxes: Porphyry, *De antro nympharum* 24, *JMS* 1 (1976) 95–98 (repr. Beck 2004a, 129–32).

[225] Alessandro Bausani agreed with the astral interpretation in general, having indeed been the first scholar since Stark to raise the possibility in print: Interpretazione paleoastronomica delle stele di Triora, *Bollettino del Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici* 10 (1973) 1–19. But he argued that the motif was an adaptation of the ancient Mesopotamian theme of the lion attacking the bull, which would imply a date in the autumn. He anyway considered Insler's dating to the spring untenable: Nota sulla preistoria astronomica del mito di Mitra, in Bianchi 1979, 503–15.

[226] Beck's position was developed gradually: see the various essays now collected in 2004a. In 2006 however he presents a substantially new line on many of these topics, which, although important, I have no space to discuss here.

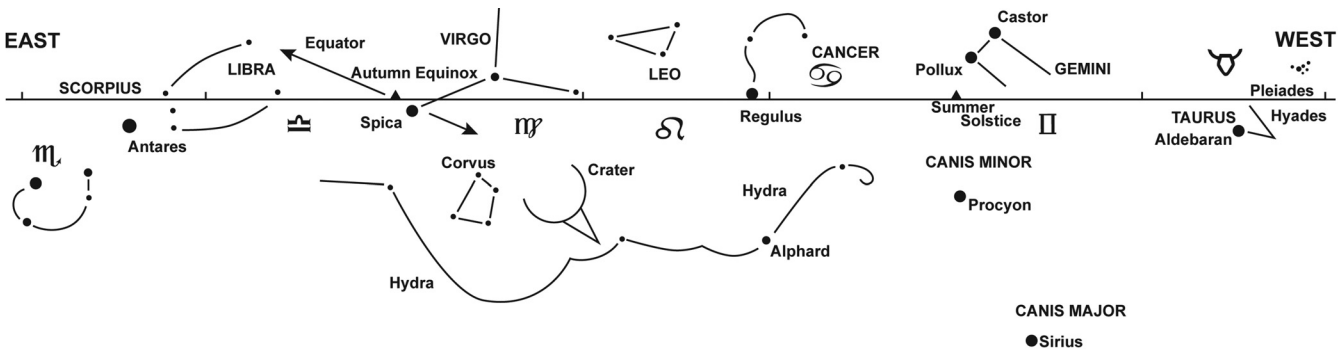

Fig. 3. The ecliptic and zodiac from Taurus to Scorpius, with the southern *paranatellonta* of the summer quadrant (c. AD 100).

Beck's main interest was in determining the period of the year represented by the tauroctony. On the assumption that it depicts the part of the ecliptic between Taurus and Scorpius, he reckoned it must represent the constellations on the ecliptic in the southern sky at a moment when Taurus is setting in the West and Scorpius is rising in the East at sunset. Such a situation occurs in mid-August, the time of the harvest—indeed the harvest must be the core reference of the allegory. Insler, on the other hand, took the constellations to be those visible at the heliacal rising of Taurus. This fundamental disagreement between the two earliest proponents of the astral hypothesis meant that the hope that it would yield irrefrangible, 'scientific' meanings—and that was surely the secret of its appeal—was very soon dashed.[227]

While Beck was still building up his interpretation, a number of other hypotheses about the astral significance of the Mithraic icon appeared. The discussion turns on rather fine astronomical details that are not always easy to follow. Virtually all the participants agreed that the bull must be the constellation Taurus, and that the various other figures represent zodiacal constellations. Yet no one could agree on the identity to be allocated on these premises to Mithras.[228] Michael Speidel located all the constellations on the celestial equator; on this hypothesis the only major constellation missing was allegedly Orion the Hunter, which must therefore be identical with Mithras.[229] The Finno-Swedish scholar Karl-Gustav Sandelin suggested Auriga.[230] The debate became really heated when David Ulansey intervened with a book neatly calculated to appeal to a wide public, *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries*.[231] For him, Mithras was to be equated with the constellation Perseus. The origin of this identification was to be found in the lucubrations of a group of Stoicising intellectuals in the city of Tarsus in Cilicia. In brief, Ulansey used the fact that occasionally Cautes is shown holding a bull's head, and Cautopates a scorpion (e.g. V. 2120, 2122, Sarmizegetusa) to argue that they were associated with

[227] Another expression of the desire for a 'scientific' basis for interpretation is the appeal by D.R. Small to linguistics, and in particular grammar: The Raven: an iconographic adaptation of the planet Mercury, in Bianchi 1979, 531–49.

[228] See more fully Beck 2004c, 242–5.

[229] M.P. Speidel, *Mithras-Orion: Greek Hero and Roman Army God*. EPROER 81 (Leyden 1980).

[230] Mithras = Auriga?, *Arctos* 22 (1988) 133–35.

[231] Ulansey 1989; cf. already his Mithras and Perseus, *Helios* 13 (1986) 33–62.

the constellations Taurus and Scorpius.[232] The equatorial constellation midway between these points is Perseus, who must therefore be Mithras. Then Taurus and Scorpius must represent Mithras' 'seat', as Porphyry tells us, that is, the equinoxes. But during the Empire, as everyone knows, the equinoctial constellations were Aries and Libra; the equinoxes had not been in Taurus and Scorpius for two thousand years. This slippage has been known since Copernicus as the 'precession of the equinoxes', and for Ulansey it provided the clue to the origins of the mysteries. For precession had allegedly been discovered by the Greek astronomer Hipparchus of Samos in the second century BC, which he noted as a very slow secondary movement of the fixed stars, in addition to the familiar westwards rotation, which gave rise to the gradual shift of the equinoctial constellations.[233] The hypothetical Tarsian intellectuals (for whom there is not a shred of direct evidence) later interpreted Mithras' role as cosmokrator as his lordship of precession. This widely-publicised and indeed well-written thesis, which appeared among other places in the *Scientific American*, has attracted a considerable popular following, but also been met with sharp criticism from the specialists.[234] As one reviewer put it: "In several ways… the author arouses admiration for his ingenuity but not the conviction that he is right".[235]

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[232] This association at least is a fact, however we explain it: see the material collected by Vermaseren in the context of the rediscovery in Brazil of the 'monument of Ottaviano Zeno' (V. 335): *Mithriaca IV: Le monument d'Ottaviano Zeno et le culte de Mithra sur le Célius*. EPROER 16.4 (Leyden 1978) 36–41.

[233] Ulansey 1989, 76–81. The precession is in fact caused by the slight shifting of the earth's axis at an annual rate of 50.3 seconds of arc per year = 1° every 71.6 years, so that the rotation axis of the earth moves round the ecliptic north pole roughly every 25,700 years (the 'Great Platonic Year'). This shift is due to the differential gravitational pull of the Sun and the Moon and the fact that the earth is not a perfect sphere. As a result, the equinoctial points and the celestial pole move, which gives rise to the phenomenon of precession, most easily perceptible in the westward shift of the zodiacal sign in which the vernal equinox occurs (5,000 years ago it was in Taurus, now it is in Pisces). Its climatic effect is that summers and winters become progressively milder or more pronounced every 12,900 years (the Milankovitch cycle), because the positions of the equinoxes and solstices change slightly each year. Over the next 10,000 years or so, irrespective of global warming, winters in the northern hemisphere will thus gradually become longer and more severe.

[234] E.g. J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *CRAI* 1990, 281–85; idem, *Ciel. Bulletin de la Société Astronomique de Liège* 52 (1990) 197–208; Swerdlow 1991; M. Schütz, Hipparch und die Entdeckung der Präzession, *EJMS* 1 (2000); idem, Hipparchs Deutung der Präzession: Bemerkungen zu David Ulansey, *EJMS* 4 (2004); reply by D. Ulansey, Once Again Hipparchus and the Discovery of the Precession, *EJMS* 3 (2003).

[235] J.G. Griffiths, in *CR* 41 (1991) 122–24. For an enthusiastic review, however, note I. Huld-Zetsche and M. Köppf, *Germania* 74 (1996) 291–98.

Though it was for a time fashionable, the astral hypothesis has not succeeded in convincing many scholars. For one thing, it is very difficult to date the time of year signified by a particular rising or setting phenomenon. Then again, does not the sheer number of incompatible hypotheses undermine the whole approach despite its superficial plausibility? According to Beck, the chances of a coincidence occurring like this (between the arrangement of the stars on this part of the ecliptic and the Mithraic icon) are extremely small; but in order to explain what the point is, he now asks us to follow him in an elaborate and impressively-constructed theory of 'star-talk' (Beck 2006). It is nevertheless tempting to join Swerdlow in his radical dismissal of the entire line of argument (Swerdlow 1991).[236] Whatever the truth here may be, we can at least agree that Mithraism was influenced by astronomical knowledge to a far greater extent than any of the other mysteries: its adherents were evidently stimulated to an interest in how the universe is ordered.[237] The present tendency at any rate seems to be to envisage a process, necessarily speculative in view of the absence of reliable data, involving an Iranian basis, its Hellenistic transformation, and a constant Roman adaptation and re-interpretation, the iconography serving as a recursive point, a constant stimulus to reinterpretation and new meanings, including the exploration of the implications of the belief that this was a Persian cult.[238] It is indeed the polyvalence of Mithraic symbolism that makes its interpretation so difficult, but also gives it a remarkable coherence, if we regard the tauroctony both as a pseudo-historical narrative of universal scope and as a sort of star-chart representing the recurrence of the equinoxes, 'the proper seat

[236] I do not feel competent to enter into the technical debate, but his criticism of Ulansey seems valid. However I would dispute Swerdlow's claim that Mithraism was a very limited sort of religion and represented no danger to Christianity, not so much because of the surprisingly superficial positivist arguments offered but because of the powerful impression the cult made in its own time. It is this that encourages me to reject his notion that it was just a sort of off-duty club, and view it as a complex phenomenon, both as regards its claims and its rituals, of religious, intellectual, historical and social importance, in which many people in the Empire found the spiritual nourishment they sought, even if the Church Fathers did not care for it.

[237] B. Jacobs, *Die Herkunft und Entstehung der römischen Mithrasmysterien. Überlegungen zur Rolle des Stifters un zu den astronomischen Hintergründen der Kultlegende* (Constance 1999) is a good summary of the issues. He uses the astronomical arguments to argue for an origin at Rome.

[238] Cf. R.L. Gordon, *Persaei sub rupibus antri*: Überlegungen zur Entstehung der Mithrasmysterien, in: *Ptuj im römischen Reich/Mithraskult und seine Zeit: Akten des intern. Symposion Ptuj, 11–15. Okt. 1999*. Archaeologia Poetovionensis 2 (Ptuj 2001 [2002]) 289–301.

of Mithras' according to Porphyry (*De antro* 24), thus simultaneously conveying two aspects of the Mithraic understanding of Time.

I think we can summarise the central meaning of Mithraic iconography as follows. The bull represents the idea of generative potential. It either represents, or is closely linked to, the Moon, understood as a source of life, which only the Sun can activate. The gods share an existence in heaven (Pl. 17); one of them, Mithras, is destined to produce the vital spark, since he is Sol Invictus. He steals the bull-Moon from its celestial home, represented by the temple (Pl. 16, top) and, despite its resistance, kills it. The quarrel between Mithras and Helios perhaps derives from this act: Helios must have been the owner of the bull Mithras stole in order to bring about the creation of the world. They are reconciled however and shake hands (Pl. 18); this may be the mythical reference of a ritual act between initiate and Mithraic Father in an otherwise obscure Greek *symbolon* recorded by Firmicus Maternus: Μύστα βοοκλοπίης, συνδέξιε πατρὸς ἀγαυοῦ, "Initiate of a bull-theft, hand-clasper of an august Father" (*De errore* 5.2 = Sanzi 2003, 432: Mithras 19.1). In this form, the phrase was an acclamation of a neophyte, *syndexios* being the technical Mithraic word for an initiate, but the act seems clearly to be modelled on the bye-scene where Mithras and Sol shake hands, an event that takes place after the killing of the bull and apparently before the banquet they share.[239]

The theft and killing was thus a deliberate, positive act on the part of Mithras performed in order to achieve the desired end: the bull's death is no mere sacrifice but the truly heroic culmination of a strange form of hunt. At the moment the death occurred, the world we know was created. This occurred mythically at a particular time of year, when the Sun's heat drives away the winter cold and brings about the regeneration of nature. The creation of the world thus models the annual re-awakening of nature. Taking Mithras' 'proper seat' into account, we might argue that his birth (*genesis* = *natura*) occurred at the autumn equinox, and the eternal liberation of the forces of nature (*apogenesis*) at the spring equinox.[240]

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[239] Firmicus Maternus introduces the *symbolon* by saying: *Virum vero abactorem bovum colentes sacra eius ad ignis transferent potestatem*, '[The Persians and Magi], who worship a man who steals away cattle, interpret his cult as (celebrating) the power of fire'. He claims that we know this because it is stated by *propheta eius*, evidently referring to the Mithraic claim that the mysteries had been founded by Zoroaster.

[240] This would be the logic of the dominant polarity as understood by Beck and others (Beck 1998b), though I rather doubt that Beck would follow me here. I accept that the suggestion in the text is pure speculation, for which there is no ancient evidence.

We have no idea how the hunt-sacrifice was linked to the creation of mankind, but it is clear that the once-for-all act of creation made life possible and that this demiurgic act entailed or modelled the annual repetition of the process, so that it could subsequently be read at two levels, astrological and naturalistic.[241] The bull's death was not due to gratuitous violence but was necessary in order to initiate the cycle of life. It took meaning within a context of ideas associated with the god, as lord of the rhythms of life, already in the fifth-century BC Yašt 10 (the Hymn to Miθra). The cosmogony linked Helios-Sol to the creation and no doubt to its annual recurrence.[242] The scene on the altar V. 1584, from Poetovio III, where the raven seems to be seizing some of the meat being roasted prior to the banquet of Mithras and Sol in order to carry it up to heaven, suggests that the bull's death was also understood as an offering to the gods; and perhaps that humans have to thank them also for its annual reiteration in the form of the renewal of life (Pl. 19). Reverence for the gods and personal effort were key virtues demanded of Mithras' adherents in the West, just as they were in Iran, even though of course the western worshippers could have no inkling of the nature of the actual Iranian cult of Mithra, which was celebrated in an entirely different cultural context. Our sources often insist on the Persian origins of Mithraism: we cannot tell whether that claim was indeed true, or whether the main value of such an insistence was to be able to claim the prestige clinging to great antiquity. At any rate, the Mithraists believed it.[243]

Given the frequent ancient confusion between magi and Chaldaeans, between Persian priests and astrologers, it is of some interest that the Mithraic narrative evidently stressed certain astronomic-astrological connections. When a moment, or a series of moments, from the narrative was reduced to the standard Graeco-Roman iconographic form, the absence of an authoritative text expounding a normative interpretation of images that were not subtended by well-known Classical stories

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[241] As Insler 1978 suggested. The iconography leaves no room for doubt that Mithras hunts the bull down (Gordon 1988, 65), while the bull's s death only acquires its full meaning when understood as a sacrifice. I see no point in trying to force an opposition between hunt and sacrifice.

[242] Cf. Gnoli 1979, 740: "la simbologia della fecondità non è che uno dei modi in cui può essere percepita l'alternanza vita-morte e in cui può esprimersi la vicenda del dio mistico e dell' anima divina: la simbologia astrale e l'alternanza luce-tenebre ne constituiscono un' altra, non meno valida, modalità".

[243] Cf. Statius, *Theb.* 1.719f.; Origen, *Contra Cels.* 6.22; Porphyry, *De antro* 6; *De abstin.* 4.16.2–3.

encouraged their interpretation in astronomical terms, among others. The complexity of the ancient astrological understanding of the heavens, with its risings and settings, houses and exaltations, dodecatamories and tropic degrees, provided ample material for ingenious minds. A dialectic that has recurred in the modern interpretation of the Mithraic icon may thus have established itself first in antiquity, and for much the same reasons. Many apparently contradictory or discrepant claims can be understood in this way. I think that Roman Mithraism responded positively to the demand to provide a coherent system of beliefs that gave an account of the relation between the stars, particularly the seven planets and the twelve signs of the zodiac, and human life, and so of the cosmic order as a whole, with this world at its centre. This became the basis of a cult that, as we shall see, paid particular attention to the outer frame of the reality or vision proposed by it, which I have suggested must be a key criterion of any proper religious system.

It will by now be clear that the case of Mithras was different from the other mystery gods in that he had no personal experience of death himself.[244] Of course there was no imperative here. Neither Isis nor Cybele herself experiences death: they do so vicariously through their paredroi, Osiris and Attis. One way of increasing the parallelism between the three of them is Alfred Loisy's suggestion that the bull in Mithraism is an allegory of the god himself (Loisy 1930, 200). Understandably, almost no one has followed him in this, though the idea has never been specifically rebutted.[245]

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[244] This fact creates a certain amount of difficulty concerning the most appropriate terms to use, as is clear from the Proceedings of Bianchi's Soteriology conference, for example in Turcan's point 2 in his summary (Bianchi and Vermaseren 1982, xvii), and in Bianchi's concession at the Seduta del 26 settembre: "et, un peu déplacé, Mithra" (p. 883, cf. 885). Burkert 1987, 8; 41f.; 84 repeatedly emphasises how untypical the cult of Mithras is in the context of Greek mystery cults.

[245] I have found the idea repeated only in the rather uninteresting—indeed supererogatory—book by E. Wynne-Tyson, *Mithras. The Fellow in the Cap* (London 1952, repr. 1972) 136, who borrows the phrase "the bull of Mithras killed by the god who was himself" from A. Weigall [1880–1934], *The Paganism in our Christianity* (London 1928). Robert Turcan has on several occasions criticised Loisy's 'exaggeration', e.g. Turcan 1982b, 178 n. 50, and again in the same volume (Bianchi and Vermaseren 1982, 886); Beck ibid. 887 shares his view, but offers a considered reason for his rejection. Turcan's position is in large measure based on a no-nonsense reading of the imagery, but it is obvious that this need by no means coincide with the reality of the myth. The latter must have been far richer than allowed for by his remarks (e.g. 1981a, 41f.) à propos Cumont's belief that Mithras suffered because he was ordered to perform his heroic deed (e.g. Cumont 1929, 26: "condamné à créer le monde dans la douleur"). Here he emphasises the god's 'visage serein et décidé': there is no sign of the regret of the sort

It seems to me that insufficient attention has been paid to the relation between Mithras and his sacrificial victim, which is quite different from that between sacrificant and animal in civic cult.[246] The most important point is that, quite apart from the fact that it is a god who is sacrificing, the death of the bull gives rise to, or produces, life. This is the mystical paradox whereby death is no true death, but life. It is in this sense that, without pressing the point to complete identification, we can postulate a sort of bond or projection between Mithras and his victim.[247]

It is important to remember that the death of a primordial bull was a feature of several variants of the Zoroastrian and indeed pre-Zoroastrian creation-myths. The usual Zoroastrian version was that Ahriman, the spirit of negation, had killed the cosmic bull. But recent research

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we might expect if there were a relation between sacrificant and victim. Against that, we might ask: what conclusion are we to draw if we note the direction of the gaze of the Father and the Holy Spirit in the presence of the crucifixion? Grimaces of pain are appropriate to mortals, as in the case of images of the Passion, but not gods.

In his remarks in Bianchi and Vermaseren 1982, 899, Turcan urges that Mithras' epithet *invictus* could not be applied to Attis or Osiris, because they experience πάθη. But in fact the character of a *deus invictus* is not incompatible with suffering or even with death, which is such an arcanum in religious thought—think of the paradox of a god, omnipotent, redeemer, and of course immortal, who is mastered and nailed to a cross. Here Jan Bergman's remarks à propos Osiris, who can be called *invictus* despite his having been torn to pieces (*magnus deus denique summus parens invictus*: Apuleius, *Met.* 11.27.2), are very relevant (ap. Bianchi and Vermaseren 1982, 902f.), as are those of M. Simon on Hercules (ibid. 903). For *invictus* used of Serapis, see RICIS 501/0146 and 501/0147 (Rome, first quarter III^{p}); 603/1102 (Tarraconensis, same period) 616/0205 and 0207 (Sarmizegetusa, both by *procuratores Aug.*, same period); 617/0101 (Moesia Sup., same period); cf. H. Engelmann, *The Delian Aretalogy of Sarapis*. EPROER 44 (Leyden 1975) 24; Hornbostel 1973, 273f. (coins and Kleinkunst). It seems likely that it was a borrowing from the cult of Mithras at the time of Caracalla: Malaise 1972a, 194f. and 441. It must however be admitted that Attis is never called *invictus*.

[246] This is one of the best points in Elsner 1995, 190–245, cf. 1998, 205–21. Mithras is not the recipient of the sacrifice but himself the sacrificant; consequently the tauroctony is not a representation of an actual sacrifice but a symbolic image. This is precisely one of the great innovations of Mithraic religious art, in that the image in context annuls the distance between reality and and its representation, the distance taken for granted in the case of images of sacrifice in civic religion. That is, in the mithraeum, the cult-image and the ritual are united in a single physical and temporal space, in an allegorical world whose referents are to be found the 'other world'. As Elsner says (1995, 218–21) Mithraism required a strong commitment and a complex ritualisation in order to resolve the contradictions within such a symbolism. In the later book (1998), intended for a wider audience, Elsner just presents his previous conclusions without the decent subtleties of the earlier book.

[247] J. Bergman suggested at the Soteriology conference that 'Mithras and the bull' can be considered a couple parallel to Cybele and Attis, Isis and Osiris, each understood as two persons, or, better, roles: "Le Taureau meurt, mais Mithras reste *invictus*" (ap. Bianchi and Vermaseren 1982, 902).

has produced some (rather speculative) evidence that there may have been a very ancient pre-Zoroastrian Iranian version in which Mithras sacrificed the bull in order to free light, and the life-principle, from the confines of darkness (Kreyenbroek 1994). It may be that victim and slaughterer, created by the same divinity, retained some trace of their common parentage. Whatever the actual process, it seems certain that for adherents of the cult in the second century AD the tauroctony had a value different from that of earlier times, even if there was some continuity. And in the Roman reworking of the cult, it is possible that a connection was established between Mithras and the bull such that the god's essential nature could be understood as similar to that of the other analogous mystery deities.[248]

In fact it seems probable that it is the bull's blood that produces life and so salvation, since it evidently contained the animal's divine essence.[249] The bull thus contains the potentiality that the other systems we have looked at assign to the god (Osiris, Attis). In Mithraism the god himself mediates between the vessel that contains the potential for life and creation itself. Thanks to the sacrifice Mithras performs, the bull becomes part of him, in the sense that if it were not present, there could be no demiurgic act. It is therefore quite unnecessary actually to identify the bull with Mithras, as Loisy did; it would be enough for them, inseparable as they were, to have been considered interchangeable as agents of the effects of the sacrifice. Indeed, Porphyry seems to suggest as much at *De antro* 18 (= Sanzi 2003, 421: Mithras 8.5), where, in the context of the astrological connection of the Moon with Taurus and the well-known origin of bees [= souls] from dead bulls, he says: καὶ ψυχαὶ δ' εἰς γένεσιν ἰοῦσαι βουγενεῖς, καὶ βουκλόπος θεὸς ὁ τὴν γένεσιν λεληθότως † ἀκούων †, 'and souls come into genesis born of

[248] Casadio has recently suggested that the scorpion is attempting to castrate the bull, which would build a bridge between bull and Attis (2003, 266f.).

[249] I am perfectly aware of the difficulties involved in equating the sacrificial victim, who must of course be a sacred object in some sense, with the god himself to whom the offering is made. As H. Hubert and M. Mauss put it, "a divine victim is not a victim-god": *Sacrifice: Its Nature and* Function. Tr. W.D. Halls (Chicago 1964) 78 (= Essai sur la nature et fonction du sacrifice, *Année sociologique* 2 (1898) 29–138 at 115f.). In their view, sacrifice may exalt the victims in such a way as to divinise them directly, but in order for a god to be a victim there must be an affinity between his nature and that of the victims. Agrarian cults typically fulfil this condition. Moreover, a sacrificial victim need not be divine, but once divine victims become thinkable, we cannot exclude the possibility that the Mithaic bull might have been one.

bulls, and the Bull-stealing God is he who [?steals; ?brings; ?promotes] genesis secretly'.

Other allegorical interpretations might be invoked here, though they are of course merely speculative. C.G. Jung, for example, suggested the tauroctony might represent the benefit given mankind by the victory of the spiritual, represented by Mithras, over animality, symbolised by the horned bull.[250] Disregarding the moral judgement implied there, the god might represent the civilising principle by contrast with primal nothingness: reality does not yet exist but is merely potential, confined inside an entity of extraordinary vital force represented by the primeval bull taking its rest in a sacral space (the temple depicted on some monuments) out of time.

However that may be, we can surely say that Mithras' task was to free the forces contained within the bull and give life the chance to come into the world. His destiny is fulfilled in the killing: gods and mankind acknowledge the heroic exploit that produces the generation of the cosmos.[251] If the god's birth implies his control over the cosmic order, the tauroctony is an extraordinary allegory of universal scope that was also reproduced in initiation. According to Origen's quotation of the account by the anti-Christian philosopher Celsus (written c. AD 177–80), some Mithraists at any rate imagined that the soul ascended through the seven planetary orbits, and passed from there into the sphere of the fixed stars, ἡ ἀπλανὴς περίοδος.[252] Initiation took place of course in the mithraeum, which we know was an image of the cosmos. Tauroctony, initiation and mithraeum frame the imaginary universe within which Mithras exercises his dominion over the cosmos.[253] It is inside the mithraeum that real and mythical time interpenetrate such

[250] *L'homme et ses symboles* (Paris 1964) 147. Of course, the bull, as a repository of cosmogonic power, could never represent either chaos or animality, but simply contains life. It is for that reason it is sought out by the demiurge and sacrificed, thus liberating the forces of nature that give rise to life.

[251] Cf. Zwirn 1989, 9. This may be one of the significances of the depiction on some German and Danubian complex reliefs, above the tauroctony, of the assembly of the (twelve) gods, representing heaven as the abode of the gods, e.g. V. 1292, Top no. 1 (Pl. 17 here) = C.R. Long, *The Twelve Gods of Greece and Rome.* EPROER 107 (Leyden 1987) 27f. no. 1 (unhelpful commentary on p. 288); 1128 = Schwertheim 1974, 84f. no. 61l (Danubian, found at Nida/Heddernheim III) scene 11; V. 1475 = Selem 1980, 84f. no. 15 with pl. XVII.2 (Siscia, Pannonia Sup.).

[252] *Contra Cels*. 6.22 = Sanzi 2003, 416: Mithras no. 7; cf. Turcan 2000, 110f.; suggesting that this represents a 'Great Sideral Week', not a posthumous soul-journey. I incline to prefer Beck's notion of a true soul-journey (e.g. Beck 2004a, 68–75; 267f.).

[253] Gordon 1988; Beck 2006, 102–12.

that the cosmogonic process can in a sense continue there; where the grand machinery whirrs that keeps the universe going, with its heavenly gates for the souls to enter the world and then leave it after death.

I would then want to suggest a certain parellelism between Mithraism and the other cases we have already examined: Mithras is a god who controls the heavens; by virtue of his own power, he bestows order on nature, brings about agricultural and sexual fertility, and provides his followers with a example to follow. Mithras does indeed not himself suffer. But we might think of the bull as a sort of substitute figure, not of course a manifestation of the god himself, but as a being whose nature is divine, all the more so because he becomes the victim whose death is the necessary precondition of life.[254]

2. Humankind in the World

> Dragonflies drift on the river,
> Their faces look upon the face of the Sun,
> (But then) suddenly there is nothing.
> Gilgamesh XI.vi = Dalley 1989, 109

> Il est très rare qu'un homme peut supporter sa condition comme homme…
> André Malraux, *La condition humaine* (1933)

The poverty and vagueness of the sources available make it impossible to write a proper anthropology of the mysteries. It is difficult to engage with the problem, since there has been little exploration even where the opportunity offered.[255] Nevertheless it seems worth offering a preliminary sketch here. The absence of theories developed by the adherents of the

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[254] Cf. Turcan 2000, 76. I might here mention the rather simplistic account—he calls it 'holistic'—of P. Bilde, The Meaning of Roman Mithraism, in J. Podemann Sørenson 1989, 31–47.

[255] A study such as I suggest might have found a place in the volume edited by J. Bleecker, *Anthropologie religieuse. L'homme et sa destiné à la lumière de l'histoire des religions.* Studies in the History of Religions 2 (Leyden 1955). Among other articles there, let me draw attention to that of R. Pettazzoni, La condition humaine, pp. 1ff., where I found my epigraph from Malraux. He recalls the seven sages of Greek tradition, who exhorted human-beings to confine themselves to their human condition, know their own limitations, abstain from excess and think and act like mortals. The themes of J. Ries (ed.), *Traité d' anthropologie du Sacré,1: Les origines et le problème de l'Homo Religiosus* (Paris 1992), have no direct relation to my aims here. R. Lapointe, *Socio-anthropologie du religieux, 1: La religion populaire au péril de la modernité* (Geneva 1988) and ~ *2: Le cercle enchanté du croyance* (Geneva 1988) is an interesting general introduction to popular religion.

mysteries makes it still more difficult to characterise them in terms of their anthropology. We lack information about their view of the world, and the relation between humans and their environment.[256] We can at most discuss the influence that different philosophical traditions may have had on the authors who transmit information about the mysteries, but of course that is a far cry from the mysteries' own conception of the human condition. It is likely that some leading ideas later picked up by Christianities had already found a place in the thinking of the adherents of the mysteries. These may include the idea that the body is the prison of the soul (assuming the existence in the mysteries of an opposition of this kind) or, more plausibly, the metaphor of death as a liberation, which does seem to have played a part in initiation into the mysteries and is often referred to by Paul.[257] As for the Christianities, they offered answers appropriate to every type of issue that was raised. The mysteries could not offer a formula remotely comparable to the thought that God has created human-beings so that they may reverence and worship him for ever.[258] In fact, such a formulation drives a wedge between the object of human life and that of the remainder of creation, since the latter has no other role than to facilitate or serve the reproduction of humanity so that it may devote itself to the veneration of God.[259] Human-beings were thus placed squarely at the centre of

[256] However I fully agree with Turcan's formulation: "All these cults that originated in the east, although very hellenised, provided their initiates with an explanation of the world and of man in the world. Their cosmic perspective coincided with the social and supra-national reality of an universal empire such as that of Rome": Cultes mystériques et culture classique dans le monde romain, in A. Caquot and P. Canivet (eds.), *Ritualisme et vie intérieure. Religion et culture. Colloques de 1985 et 1987*. Société E. Renan: Histoire des Religions. Le Point théologique 52 (Paris 1989) 152–68 at 155.

[257] Death is the point of entry into an unfathomable darkness from which humans must be saved and from which they can be redeemed by divine power. As such, death becomes the key to an incredibly rich allegorical world: D.E. Aune, Human Nature and Ethics in Hellenistic Philosophical Traditions and Paul: Some Issues and Problems, in T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul in his Hellenistic Context* (Edinburgh 1994) 291–312.

[258] This is the burden of Athenagoras, *De resurr. carnis*, written under Marcus Aurelius. He concludes (22): "And we shall make no mistake in saying that the aim of a an intelligent life and rational judgement is to be occupied uninterruptedly with those objects to which the natural reason is chiefly and primarily adapted, and to rejoice unceasingly in the contemplation of Him who is, and of his decrees, notwithstanding that the majority of men, because they are affected too passionately and too violently by things below, pass through life without attaining this object" (tr. H.J. Richardson). Cf. also Lactantius, *De ira* 14.1–2.

[259] Socrates is made to say as much at Xenophon, *Mem*. 4.3.9f. Euthydemus replies: ὁρῶ γὰρ [τὰ ζῷα…] οὕτως ὑποχείρια γιγνόμενα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, ὥστε χρῆσθαι αὐτοῖς

creation, at the fulcrum of the world order, such that nothing had a meaning except in relation to humanity.[260]

From this point of view, animals and plants had no other purpose than biological reproduction, whereas human-beings had a further dimension, the spiritual, which their culture gave them in the form of a particular religion. Under these circumstances Stoicism and other hegemonic philosophies of antiquity simply could not raise the issue of the rights of animals. Nor could the suffering of animals be considered a sufficient reason to develop a positive theory of such rights.[261] The problem was only an issue in relation to the claims of vegetarians. These acquired a special relevance in the context of religious debates over blood-sacrifice, which were of some importance in the Empire at the time of the floruit of the mysteries.[262] This is the context of Porphyry's work *De abstinentia*, which was written around AD 270 under the influence of Plotinus' views,[263] and is the most important theoretical discussion of the relation between humans and animals to have come down to us from antiquity.[264] There he claims, apparently following an argument not recorded by Plutarch in *De sollertia*, that animals and plants have different natures, since animals have sensation, can suffer, be afraid, suffer loss; and it is therefore meaningful to say that it is possible for them to be maltreated. The same cannot be said about

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ὅ τι ἂν βούλωνται, "I see that animals…are born so subordinate to men that the latter can make use of them as they like".

[260] Cyprian's position was different, however, cf. J.P. Burns, Cyprian's Eschatology: Explaining Divine Purpose, in A.J. Malherbe, F.W. Norris and J.W. Thompson (eds.), *The Early Church in Context: Essays in Honour of E. Ferguson*. Suppl. Novum Testamentum 90 (Leyden 1998) 59–73. For an introduction to these problems in the main religions today, cf. J. Holm (ed.), *Human Nature and Destiny* (London and New York 1994), esp. the contribution on Christianity by D. Davies, pp. 39–70.

[261] The idea of the superiority of animals was quite dead at latest by the fifth century BC, except as a trope to underscore the imperfections of humanity, cf. A.O. Lovejoy and G. Boas, *Primitivism and Related ideas in Antiquity* (New York 1965 [1935[1]]) 389–420.

[262] J. Haussleiter, *Der Vegetarismus in der Antike* (Berlin 1935); D. Tsekourakis, Pythagoreanism or Platonism and Ancient Medicine? The Reasons for Vegetarianism in Plutarch's *Moralia*, *ANRW* II.36.1 (1987) 366–91: Sælid Gilhus 2006, 64–77. C. Osborne, Ancient Vegetarianism, in J. Wilkins, D. Harvey and M. Dobson, *Food in Antiquity* (Exeter 1995) 214–24 is simply a commentary on Porphyry; she completely disregards other sources and modern studies (even Haussleiter).

[263] Cf. J. Bidez, *Vie de Porphyre* (Ghent 1913); J. Bouffartigue and M. Patillon, *Porphyre: De l'abstinence* 1 (Paris 1977) xviii–xix [Budé].

[264] See the excellent translation and commentary by G. Clark, *Porphyry: On Abstinence from Killing Animals* (London 2000); also D.A. Dombrowski, Porphyry and Vegetarianism: A Contemporary Philosophical Approach, *ANRW* II.36.2 (1987) 774–91.

plants (*De abst.* 3.19.2).[265] My guess is that the mysteries contributed to installing normative anthropocentrism into the sacrificial system of antiquity. The emperor Julian, who knew a good deal about the mysteries and attempted to restore animal-sacrifice to its earlier centrality, seems to suggest as much. Two centuries earlier, Apuleius, an expert on the same area, set out to imagine the sufferings of a human-being who takes on an animal's body. But his account is essentially no different from Julian's: he just confirms the anthropocentric view of his contemporaries. We have to wait until the twelfth century to find Moses Maimonides of Cordoba claiming that to inflict suffering on animals corrupts our characters and makes us vicious.[266] The dominant view in classical antiquity was that human dominion over all other creatures is an incontrovertible fact. An illustration might be Ovid's description of the creation of man, where he stresses that, whereas the other animals were forced to look down at the ground, humans were endowed with a face that enabled them to gaze up at heaven and the stars:

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[265] Cf. R. Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals. The Origins of the Western Debate* (London 1993) 208.

[266] *Guide* 3.17 and 48. The first passage is part of a discussion of whether divine providence also includes animals; we ought not to make them suffer unnecessarily, only when our needs require it, and we ought not to kill them out of cruelty or whim. Maimonides' thinking is clearly marked by the tension between his conception of personal freedom (perhaps exaggerated by modern scholars) and the destiny prescribed by God: M. Sokol, Maimonides on Freedom of the Will and Moral Responsibility, *HThR* 91 (1998) 25–39. The bibliography on Maimonides' ethics is immense. For the passages themselves, see, apart from the excellent annotated Spanish translation by D. Gonzalo Maeso, *Rabbi Mosé ben Maimon (Maimónides): Guía de perplejos* (Madrid 1984), the abridged English ed. by J. Guttmann (tr. C. Rabin), *The Guide for the Perplexed* (London 1952 and often repr.). I have not seen the new Kegan Paul edition: *Guide for the Perplexed* (London 2006). R.L. Weiss, *Maimonides' Ethics: The Encounter of Philosophic and Religious Morality* (Chicago and London 1991) 167ff. outlines Maimonides' concept of compassion in relation to his respect for animals, cf. S. Rosenberg, La ética en Maimonides, in J. Peláez (ed.), *Sobre la vida y obra de Maimónides* (Córdoba 1991) 455–62; A.J. Heschel, *Maimónides* (Barcelona 1984). On Leo Strauss' interpretation of Maimonides (with S. Pines, *Guide for the Perplexed*, 2 vols. [Chicago 1974]), see J.A. Buijs, The Philosophical Character of Maimonides' *Guide*—a Critique of Strauss' Interpretation, in idem (ed.), *Maimonides: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Notre Dame, IN 1988) 57–71. Finally, A. Sanders, *Dear Maimonides. A Discourse on Religion and Science* (Northvale, NJ and London 1996) is an unpretentious attempt to reflect on this issue from the Jewish point of view, underscoring the paradoxes of the culture. By means of the device of a series of letters between Maimonides and his favourite disciple Yosef ben Yehudah ibn Shim'on (to whom the *Guide* was dedicated), he entertainingly discusses the main historical and scientific issues from the twelfth and the twentieth centuries, highlighting how much Maimonides simply did not know.

Pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram,
os homini sublime dedit caelumque tueri
iussitet erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.[267]

Though voices were occasionally raised against this representation of the matter, they were ignored. That the mysteries went along with the dominant view is undeniable, even though, given the special features of Egyptian religion, viz. the zoomorphism of its gods, the adherents of the Egyptian cults might have been an exception.[268] Nevertheless we have explicit evidence in an anecdote in Aelian's *De natura animalium* 11.34f. that the worshippers of Serapis might consider animals as tools in the hands of gods made to serve the needs of mortals.[269] No doubt the adherents of the other mysteries thought just the same. On the other hand, an analogous belief in the natural inequality of human-beings can be found in Hellenistic-Roman thinking, despite various pleas that all humans are essentially equal.[270] Ideas about the equality or inequality of humans are tricky to talk about, since one cannot generalise to

[267] Ovid, *Met*. 1.84–86 with the commentary by F. Bömer. On the context of Ovid's thought, see F. Lämmli, *Vom Chaos zum Kosmos: Zur Geschichte einer Idee* (Basel 1962) 9ff. This theme of where one looks seems to have remained important, since among the animals forbidden to those who celebrate the Phrygian festivals was the pig, whose flesh, according to Julian, *Or*. 5. 177bc, is thought suited to the gods of the underworld but not allowed on the tables of the worshippers of Cybele because of its shape and mode of life, and the character of its meat; moreover it does not raise its eyes to heaven, not only because it does not want to do so but because it is so made that it cannot lift its gaze.

[268] We have virtually no information about the implications of this for the worshippers of Isis in the Roman period. But there is surely a hint in Diodorus Siculus' eye-witness report (1.83.8) that a Roman in Egypt paid with his life in 59 BC for involuntarily killing a cat, so seriously might respect for sacred animals be taken there, cf. K.A.D. Smelik, The Cult of the Ibis in the Graeco-Roman Period, in Vermaseren 1979, 225–43. The later Christian claim that they were zoomorphic idolaters needs to be related not just to the obvious iconography well-known to contemporaries but also to alimentary practices and concomitant ideas it is hard to get a purchase on. Some of these Christian texts, such as Prudentius, *Apotheos*. 195f.; *In Symmach*. 2. 354ff. and 532 (both on Anubis), and the ridicule of Egyptian gods and food at *Peristeph*. 10.256–60 (a notoriously unreliable text) will be found in J.-C. Grenier, *Anubis alexandrin et romain*. EPROER 57 (Leyden 1977) 69–83, where he discusses the implications of zoomorphism for followers of Isis; cf. too Witt 1966, 136.

[269] The story concerns a young man who, being seriously ill, dreamed Serapis told him to buy a live moray eel and plunge his hand into the creature's tank. When he did so, the eel bit him, but when it was pulled off, it was found it had also 'pulled off' the sickness: ὑπηρέτις…θεοῦ θεραπείας ἡ μύραινα.

[270] J. Chesneaux, Egalitarian and Utopian Traditions in the East, *Diogenes* 62 (1968) 76–102; C. Mossé, Les utopies égalitaires à l'époque héllénistique, *Revue Historique*, 241 (1969) 297–308; J. Ferguson, *Utopias of the Classical World* (London and Ithaca, NY 1975); D. Dawson, *Cities of the Gods: Communist Utopias in Greek Thought* (New York

other areas from individual statements about, say, social, moral, political, economic or religious equality.[271] For example, the famous utterance of Paul: ὅπου οὐκ ἔνι Ἕλλην καὶ Ἰουδαῖος, περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία, βάρβαρος, Σκύθης, δοῦλος, ἐλεύθερος, ἀλλὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν Χριστός, "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all in all" (*Coloss.* 3.11), is entirely restricted to this last context.[272] Moreover, although it has often been taken as a declaration of general equality within Christianity, it in fact refers to a purely theoretical access to the godhead, which the Church itself busily restricted over the following centuries of its history.

The very character of the mysteries, as well as the fact that they were embedded in the religious universe of the Roman Empire, means that it is difficult to consider them as egalitarian systems. Conditions were not favourable to the development of egalitarian utopias, and, to the degree that they sought social acceptability, as expressed in their ability to attract adherents throughout the Empire, they abandoned any pretensions they might ever have entertained to further socio-political change.[273] They had undergone a good deal of opposition before being able to enjoy the tolerance that turned them into effective instruments of social integration under the Roman oligarchy. This process is still more pronounced in the case of mainstream Christianity, since its quietistic marriage to the institutions of the state moored the notional equality of mankind in the intangible universe of the axiomatic, leaving the actual assertion of the claim to others.

Turning the mysteries again, we find that they asserted a fundamental distinction between those who had been initiated and those who had

1992); M. Schofield, *Saving the City: Philosopher-Kings and Other Classical Paradigms* (London and New York 1999) 31–68.

[271] Cf. G.J.D. Aalders, Ideas about Human Equality and Inequality in the Roman Empire: Plutarch and some of his Contemporaries, in I. Kajanto (ed.), *Equality and Inequality of Man in Ancient Thought* (Helsinki 1984) 55–71 at 56. To the contrary of much that has been written on the topic, Christianity initially changed little here, cf. H. Gülzow, *Christentum und Sklaverei in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten.* (Bonn 1969); P.D.A. Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge 1996) 189–235.

[272] In the parallel passage at *Galatians* 3.28, he adds the opposition between men and women.

[273] Note the remarks of Walters 2000, on the status and interests of the wealthy women at Athens during I-II^{p} whose families erected funerary statues of them in Isiac dress, all with knots, some with *sistra* (cf. eadem 1988). She compares them to the procession of initiates at Apuleius, *Met.* 11.10.

not. One category of persons was thus granted superiority, at least of a moral kind, over another, as we see in a passage cited by Stobaeus and generally believed to be from Plutarch's *De anima*:

> Thus we say the soul that has passed thither is dead (ὀλωλέναι), having regard to its complete (εἰς τὸ ὅλον) change and conversion. In this world it is without knowledge, except when it is already at the point of death; but when that time comes, it has an experience like that of men who are undergoing initiation into great mysteries (οἱ τελεταῖς μεγάλαις κατοργιαζόμενοι); and so the verbs τελευτᾶν (die) and τελεῖσθαι (receive initiation), and the actions they denote, have a similarity. In the beginning there is straying and wandering, the weariness of running this way and that, and nervous journeys through darkness that reach no goal, and then immediately before the consummation every possible terror, shivering and trembling and sweating and amazement. But after this a marvellous light meets the wanderer, and open country and meadow-lands welcome him; and in that place there are voices and dancing and the solemn majesty of sacred music and holy visions. And amidst these he walks at large in new freedom, now perfect and fully initiated, celebrating the sacred rites, a garland upon his head, and converses with pure and holy men; he surveys the uninitiated, unpurified mob here on earth, the mob of living men who, herded together in murk and deep mire, trample one another down and in their fear of death cling to their ills, since they disbelieve in the blessings of the other world.
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> Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 4.52.48 = frg. 178 Sandbach

On the other hand, within each cult, the array of responsibilities, duties and ranks or grades reproduced the social stratification of Roman society. Whatever the appeal to the ideal of equality expressed in the blanket terms: 'initiates', 'companions', 'brothers', 'co-religionists' and so on, the reality made all too clear that they had embraced the hierarchical option. The true function of these terms was to differentiate the members of these groups from those outside (Gordon 1972). Such a hierarchical structure reinforced the hegemonic image of man and the general anthropocentrism which was the real basis of their offer of personal salvation. Unfortunately we have no direct information about the mysteries' conception of the meaning of life or the role of mankind in the world. Although their central theme was individual salvation, the promise of a blessed life in the world beyond went hand in hand with a sort of mystic union with the divinity, even if we are not in a position to fill in any of the details. Yet the myths may give us one or two hints.

I would argue that the myths do in fact give us a more or less explicit account of the place of man in the world. Of course, just as in other

contexts, we cannot expect to get straight answers to straight questions. The myths do not tell us about existential anxieties, but they can give us some insight into the more or less specific solutions offered to them. The narratives imply a behavioural norm that is paradigmatic for the adherents of the cult. In this sense, the human situation in the world does relate to the system of beliefs, articulating a reality separate from that of the model of ethical behaviour that the myth also contains. We shall look at this more closely in the following chapter on the system of values. The myth of Attis and Cybele for example is a good illustration of the second level of analysis, the relation of man to his environment, since it is clearly concerned with the annual cycle of nature as represented by its apparent death in winter and resuscitation in spring. That the myth reproduces the agricultural cycle has been clear since Frazer (even if later work has discovered additional readings or even repressed the point), but there is no need to infer that the myth could only have been created after the development of agriculture, since hunter-gatherers were equally capable of noting the regularity of natural cycles and creating images capable of enduring in the collective imagination.

Quite apart from this, we must of course remember that the myths have themselves evolved: the original narrative has been altered in order to adapt them to changes in the relations of production. Although we can of course hardly hope to gain access to the earlier versions, the nucleus of the story persists through time. At the same time, the variants may indeed succeed in influencing the central mythologem: the grip of history upon the narrative must prejudice any hope of using the latter as a key to some claimed universal reality. The idea of 'myth in motion' is important because of its implications for the sense in which we can say we know a myth. In the cultural context we are concerned with, the myth is clearly moving away from a set of images developed—insofar as we can reconstruct them—in the context of agrarian-pastoral societies.[274] We may therefore gain the impression that such myths, in the form they have come down to us, could only have developed in the context of historical formations which have developed this type of relations of production. The important thing, then, is to emphasise how agricultural production is appropriated into the myth-cycle and revealed to be subject to the divine order rather than

[274] [The Spanish adj. is *agropecuario*, which deserves to be domesticated into English. Tr.]

to the whim of chaos. This way of presenting things tends in turn to encourage the religious subordination of the primary producer to the established order, itself legitimated by the divine will.

At the same time this order is itself organised in the interests of those who have social and ideological control over the political formation. Belief in a god who controls nature and regulates its productivity fits neatly with the politico-social domination of the class that is the primary beneficiary of that productivity. It was this that encouraged acceptance of the mystery divinities, while other traditional gods were 'orientalised': the goddess Ops for example, curiously enough, was linked to both Cybele and Isis.[275]

Evidence that has no direct connection with the myths allows us up to a point to see how the deity intervenes to establish order, thus providing an epistemologically satisfactory image of how the world really works. Nancy Shumate has offered a reading of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* that shows how the world-view of the protagonist-narrator crumbles as he comes into contact with certain 'realities' that confound his rational account of things. The *credulitas* of someone who feels himself secure in a cultural context is radically altered by the experience of alterity, represented above all by magic, which undermines a social order founded on the opposition between the central and the sub-cultural. The challenge to his old beliefs destroys his *fides* and brings chaos into his world. The impossibility of understanding how the world indeed works, the cognitive *bouleversement*, turns the protagonist-narrator into a donkey, and in that shape he experiences the irrationality of a world beastly and confused from which he is only freed by Isis.[276] The goddess instructs him in a quite different epistemological order that is stable and clear, thanks to which Lucius is able to comprehend his place in the world.[277] Apuleius' novel can thus be understood as an allegory by means of which the author expresses his conviction that personal

[275] Cf. Varro, *LL* 5.57: *Principes dei Caelum et Terra. Hi dei idem qui Aegypti Serapis et Isis, etsi Harpocrates digito significat, ut taceam. Idem principes in Latio Saturnus et Ops*; with P. Pouthier, *Ops et la conception divine de l'Abondance dans la religion romaine jusqu'à la mort d'Auguste*. BEFAR 242 (Rome 1981) 303–10.

[276] Cf. J.J. Winkler's phrase "a brutal odyssey through a strange land": 1985, 59.

[277] Cf. Shumate 1996. This is a solid piece of work, and I welcome her attempt to integrate Book 11 with the rest of the novel, but I find her claim that Apuleius' conversion is purely cognitive or epistemic very reductive. I hope in the section on Isiac ethics (Chap. 3.3) to convince the reader that the change was moral as much as anything.

identity can be independent of the public domain, a preliminary step to the defence of Isis' power to grant individual salvation.[278]

In the case of Mithras too the myth suggests that acceptance of a god capable of imposing order on the forces of nature may be instrumental for man in the context of production. It is this that gives the impression that Mithraic initiation "seems to be interested not so much in preparing the soul for its existence after death as in fitting man for his place in this world, accepting it not as better but as the only possible one, because it is guaranteed by the sacrificial act of the founding god, whether demiurge or hero" (Chirassi Colombo 1982, 317).

No less important is a topic that has already cropped up in other contexts, but which needs to be considered on its own account, since it concerns mastery of the contingent not in relation to the after-life but to the changes and chances of the real world. The literature of the Principate is full of references to the profound pre-occupation of contemporary society with the consequences of the uncontrollable forces of destiny. On the one hand, philosophers developed lines of argument to justify the given world, and offered strategies by means of which their followers could prepare themselves against reverses of fortune, should they come, and accept their entire account of the nature of things. On

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[278] Cf. Y.L. Too, Statues, mirrors, gods: controlling images in Apuleius, in J. Elsner (ed.), *Art and Text in Roman Culture* (Cambridge 1996) 133–52 at 152. Note also Finkelpearl 1998, 216: "There is an identification here of author and protagonist, not in terms of life experiences or religious kinship, but in terms of the parallel development of the events of Lucius' life and the movement of the novel". As I have already suggested in the Introduction, I accept many of the arguments of Reardon 1971, Hägg 1980 and Winkler 1985 regarding the over-all ironic tone of the novel. In the context of *Met.* Bk. 11, however, I see this position, with Anderson 1982, 84 (cf. idem 1984, 85), as a reaction to the excesses of the Kerényi-Merkelbach allegorical approach to the genre as a whole (Kerényi 1927; Merkelbach 1962) and to the credulousness of the older naive readings of *Met.* 11 as straight or 'sincere' documentation (e.g. Nock 1933a, 138–55; A.-J. Festugière, *Personal Religion among the Greeks* [Berkeley 1954] 68–84; Dodds 1965, 3; P.G. Walsh, Lucius Madaurensis, Phoenix 22 [1968] 143–57; Griffiths 1975). We need a perspective on Bk. 11 that allows us to see it both as distanced and yet also as an imaginative (fictional) insight into a particular experiential world, cf. Mimbu Kilol 1994 (though I think the main thesis, that the first ten books correspond to the prolegomena to initiation, very far-fetched). I find Méthy 1999 both slight and misguided here: we can surely allow both that Apuleius was intelligible to his readers and that they could make sense of the book's religious world, just as we can, even if his intention was also to make fun of it, e.g.: *Nec fuit nox una vel quies aliqua visu deae monituque ieiuna* (19); *nec non et equum quoque illum meum reducentes* (i.e. Lucius' friends), *quem diverse distractum notae dorsualis agnitione recuperaverant* (20); *et ecce post pauculum tempus inopinatis et usquequaque mirificis imperiis deum rursus interpellor et cogor tertiam quoque teletam sustinere…et hercules iam de fide quoque eorum* (i.e. the priests') *opinari coeptabam sequius* (29.1–3).

the other, institutionalised religion had always offered the hope that it might be possible, thanks to an entire gamut of divinatory means, to interpret the supposed will of heaven. Dreams of course were one of the main channels of information regarding the future and divine intention (Hidalgo 1992). At the same time mechanisms were developed to control those specialists who claimed access to such knowledge and to be able in return for a small sum to state how things would turn out, and even how to avert such futures.

The performance of miracles became a primary focus of religious attention.[279] Charismatic figures, so-called ἄνδρες θεῖοι, sought to trump one or other famous miracle, revealing the intense interest of the consumers of new religious experiences in the performance of such events.[280] Many hoped thereby to be able to escape from their wretched fates and of course were inclined to fall for the one whose offer was most attractive. Lucian railed at such behaviour,[281] but it is precisely thanks to his annoyance and the enthusiasm of others that we know a good deal about the performances of people like Alexander of Abonouteichos, Peregrinus Proteus, or Apollonius of Tyana just to name the most well-known.[282] Miracle became part of the sociology of knowledge, and

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[279] Here one must refer to the excellent book by H. Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century* (Philadelphia 1983), who deftly analyses the well-known cases and fits them lucidly into their social context. Note also D.L. Tiede, *The Charismatic Figure as Miracle-Worker* (Missoula MO 1972): G. Filorama and S. Roda, Religione popolare e Impero Romano, *Studi Storici* 23 (1982) 101–18 at 110; G. Anderson, *Sage, Saint and Sophist. Holy Men and their Associates in the Roman Empire* (London and New York 1994); J.A. Francis, *Subversive Virtue. Asceticism and Authority in the second-century Pagan World* (University Park, PA 1995). Peter Brown's late-antique Syrian holy-men thus had a very long lineage: P.R.L. Brown, The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity, *JRS* 61 (1971) 80–101; see also his comments on his earlier position in idem, *Authority and the Sacred* (Cambridge 1995) 57–78; and in *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998) 358–76.

[280] The standard book is L. Bieler, ΘΕΙΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ: *Das Bild des ‚Göttlichen Menschen' in Spätantike und Frühchristentum* (Vienna 1935–36, repr. Darmstadt 1967), but it now seems very dated.

[281] H.-D. Betz, *Lukian von Samosata und das Neue Testament: Religionsgeschichtliche und paränetische Parallelen. Ein Beitrag zum Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti* (Berlin 1961) is a good account of Lucian's view of Christianity.

[282] Like all the 'divine men', Alexander of Abonouteichos has been the subject of a large bibliography, some of which may be listed here: A.D. Nock, Alexander of Abonuteichos, *CQ* 22 (1928) 160–62; M. Caster, *Études sur Alexandre ou le faux prophète de Lucien* (Paris 1938); L. Robert, *À travers l'Asie Mineure: Poètes et prosateurs, monnaies grecques, voyages et géographie*. BEFAR 239 (Paris 1980) esp. his lucid comments on Lucian pp. 393–436; D. Clay, Lucian of Samosata: Four Philosophical Lives (Nigrinus, Demonax, Peregrinus, Alexander pseudomantis), *ANRW* II.36.5 (1992) 3406–3450; G. Sfameni Gasparro, Alessandro di Abonutico, lo 'pseudo-profeta', ovvero, come costruirsi un'identità

the mysteries naturally aimed to win a decent 'market-share' in this sector. The peace of mind granted by the miraculous activities of the oriental divinities of course predisposed others to join. In fact it was hard to choose between them in the holy shopping-malls sustained by the Empire's free market in religious goods (North 1992; 2003). It was the implicit aim of these cults to reduce the distress caused by this freedom of choice, though in the end the adaptability and ambiguity of mainstream Christianity won the day.[283]

At the margin of institutionalised religion, however, magic proved a very effective means of social control.[284] Both its potential subversiveness and the contempt felt for it by established intellectuals derive from this. The mysteries pushed their way into this market for personal fears too, since their claim to control of the universe applied equally to the local and contingent. Perhaps this is the reason for the links between Mithraism and magic, at least in the documents from Egypt, such as the so-called 'Mithras liturgy' (Betz 2003). On the other hand, it should be stressed that magic is an autonomous area, in the sense that, although it was of course shot through with elements borrowed from organised religion, including the mysteries, it aimed to create recipes

religiosa, 1: Il profeta, 'eroe' e 'uomo divino', *SMSR* 62 no. 20 (1996) [1998] *Omaggio D. Sabbatucci*, 565–90; ~ II: L'oracolo e i misteri, in Bonnet and Motte 1999, 275–305. On Peregrinus note: R. Pack, The 'volatilization' of Peregrinus Proteus, *AJP* 67 (1946) 334f.; G. Bagnani, Peregrinus Proteus and the Christians, *Historia* 4 (1955) 107–112 (who strangely thinks he was an Ebionite Essene); S. Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (London 1985) 30–53 argues he was a marginal Christian. Apollonius of Tyana: the place to start is now C.P. Jones' excellent new Loeb ed. and transl. (Cambridge MA and London 2005); cf. G. Petzke, *Die Traditionen über Apollonius von Tyana und das Neue Testament* (Leyden 1970); E.L. Bowie, Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality, in *ANRW* II.16.2 (1978) 1652–99; M. Dzielska, *Apollonius of Tyana in Legend and History* (Rome 1986); J.-J. Flinterman, *Power, Paideia and Pythagoreanism* (Amsterdam 1995); J.A. Francis, Truthful Fiction: New Questions to Old Answers on Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, *AJPh* 119 (1998) 419–41.

[283] On the image of Christ against this background, see H. van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (Leyden 1969); A. Vögtle, The Miracles of Jesus against their contemporary Background, in H.J. Schultz (ed.), *Jesus in his Time* (Philadelphia 1971) 89–102 [= Eng. tr. of *Die Zeit Jesu* (Stuttgart 1966)]; M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (New York 1978); B. Blackburn, *The Theios Aner and the Markan Miracle Tradition* (Tübingen 1991). I may here call attention to the debate in Lactantius, *Inst. Div.* 5.3.9 over the superiority of Christ or Apollonius, where he refers to a lost work by Hierocles Sosianus, the governor of Bithynia, who claimed that, if one had to adore a man, better Apollonius than Christ, since his miracles were finer and, on being arraigned before Domitian, he simply disappeared, whereas Christ was incapable of eluding crucifixion.

[284] R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest and Alienation in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA 1967).

'from outside' (formulae, phylacteries and amulets) that were intended to meet the same demands that the mysteries met by means of their own complex rituals.[285]

Not only did Isis offer Lucius the ass eternal life under her protection but also a brilliant career here on earth as an advocate. Whatever Apuleius' true intentions may have been, I am interested in the way he ensures, despite the comedy, that his readers grasp the contemporary longing for the control of the real world that the Egyptian deity offers. She may also have recourse to magic to achieve her objectives, calming her adherents in the face of the hierarchy of powers, that is, her control of the range of means available to foresee and control the future.[286] That this was no trivial matter is clear from the eagerness of Christian writers in pointing out the inconsistencies of these beliefs and how the devil had inspired the related practices. If there had been no widespread interest among people in the Empire, such writers would never have expended such energy to prove that Christ's message was superior to any pagan claim and, above all, how he gave his followers a peace of mind that demonic superstitions could never afford. On the other hand, one just has to read the texts to realise how closely related all these various ideological productions were, that sought to assuage the fears aroused by the religious thinking of the time. The fears and the responses alike occupied the same cultural space.[287]

We unfortunately lack the evidence adequately to discuss one of the most universal aspects of religion, the regulation of sexual relations. This represents one of the basic concerns of all religious traditions,

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[285] The relation between Mithraism, magic and the magi, esp. in the context of magical gems, is the subject of A. Mastrocinque, *Studi sul Mitraismo (Il mitraismo e la magia)* (Rome 1998). He also delivered a series of lectures at the École Pratique in 2007 on the same topic. See also E. Sanzi, Mithras: A Deus Invictus among Persia, Stars, Oriental Cults and Magical Gems, *Res Orientales* 14 (2002) 209–29.

[286] In Egypt, Isis was closely connected with (temple) magical practice, for example in the *historiola* of Isis and Ra, used for healing snake-bites: in order to extract from ageing Ra his secret name, she makes a snake and smears its fangs with Ra's saliva. The snake bites the Sun-god, who thereupon implores Isis to help; which she gives, on condition that he reveal his secret name (*P.Chester Beatty* II recto 1.3/5; *P.Torino* CG 54052; cf. *Mostra Iside*, 45 Cat. II.2). Such historiolae were written on papyrus, dissolved in beer or wine, then drunk (see also Chap. 4.4.b.ii below).

[287] Cf. J.Z. Smith, Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity, *ANRW* II.16.1 (1978) 425–439. I think that it is this polyvalence of the mystery divinities in situations where traditional religion might have opted to combine gods of different kinds that lies behind Artemidorus' claim that the Nile deities have different functions in their physical doctrine, i.e. in their allegorical equivalents, and in myth (*Oneir.* 2.39—perhaps also Cybele).

since it is closely bound up with kinship-relations in society. Together they underwrite the ability of a society to reproduce itself in a culturally acceptable manner. The role ascribed to woman in sexual relations is crucial here, for example with regard to access to the marriage-market. The refinements of the rules of social conduct are extremely important, and it is here that Christianity had an enormously disruptive effect upon the Classical tradition.[288] The same cannot be said of the mysteries. One of the central themes of the cult of the Mater Magna was the issue of the incest-taboo, but it is bound up with the sacrifice of the part for the whole as an image of agricultural renewal.[289] The surviving evidence for the myth does not allow us to establish the acceptable rules with any clarity, though the taboo itself was clearly stated, as well as the penalty for its infringement. Nevertheless forgiveness was also possible, since, once the debt had been paid through self-castration, Attis, now pure, ended up at Cybele's side ([Hippolytus], *Ref.* 5.8.24).

We have also seen how the myth of Osiris is imbued with sexual imagery and differentiation. An antithesis between the sexes is characteristic of Mithraism: no women are recorded as making votives, in sharp contrast to the other two mysteries, and, though images of female deities are not unknown, efforts seem to have been made to refuse the female principle, sometimes even by identifying natural women

[288] There were however tendencies within the pagan tradition itself on which this Christian strictness surely drew. Soranus for example claims: "Men who keep chaste are stronger and larger than others and keep healthier during their lives" (*Gyn.* 1.30.2); Galen says that Olympic athletes who are castrated are stronger (*De semine* 1.8); Artemidorus records that an athlete dreamed that he cut off his testicles, bandaged his head and was crowned as victor . . . while he kept chaste he had a brilliant and distinguished athletic career; but when he began to have sexual relations again, he ended his career in obscurity (*Oneir.* 5.95); Quintilian suggests the advocate should refrain from sexual relations in order to acquire a deep masculine voice for the courts (*Inst. or.* 11.3.19). I am grateful to C. Martínez Maza for these texts. See also, more generally, Rousselle 1983 and Brown 1988. U. Ranke-Heinemann makes the point succinctly: "It is untrue that Christianity introduced self-control and asceticism into a licentious and hedonistic heathen world. Sexual pessimism and hostility towards the pleasures of the flesh are a legacy from the ancient world which Christianity has preserved in a special measure to this day": *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven. The Catholic Church and Sexuality* (Harmondsworth 1990) 1. A more idealistic account can be found in F. Watson, *Agape, Eros, Gender: Towards a Pauline Sexual Ethic* (Cambridge 2000). More to my taste are the remarks of I.P. Culianu, The Body Re-examined, in J.M. Law (ed.), *Religious Reflections on the Human Body* (Bloomington 1995) 2–4. C.J. Bleeker has drawn up a summary list of sexual themes that have been of interest to religions: Sexuality and Religion, in idem 1975, 208–24.

[289] Cf. the account of the idea of sacrificing the part for the whole in order to obtain a greater benefit, though not with reference to agriculture, in Burkert 1996, 40–47.

with hyenas, an animal considered disgusting both in the Classical tradition and in early Christianities (e.g. *Epistle of Barnabas* ['Apostolic Fathers'] 10.7) because it symbolised the ambivalence of gender identity and the difficulty of imposing the hegemony of the male.[290] The ideal cameraderie of those who shared the same gender was radically threatened by such disconcerting alterity. Masculine insecurity could be sublimated through the domination of the other sex, as we can see in our own cultural system or can recognise in foreign systems that seem more transparent.

One example here is the story of how the Dogon of south-eastern Mali acquired their masks, which were among the means by which the *Andumbulu* obtained power over others (Griaule 1963, 59–61).[291] A woman by chance saw the *Andumbulu* dancing in wooden masks representing an old man; through a trick she got hold of their magical objects, including the mask(s), and returned with them to her village. Everyone was terrified. She hid the objects in her store-room and got on with her tasks; but someone told her husband to take them away from her, for she had become a threat to men. Dressed in the mask and the other objects, he was able to thrash her. "The men, seeing that the objects belonging to the *Andumbulu* were an instrument of domination, decided to take them away from the women.[292] For up to that time,

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[290] Gordon 1972, 98; 1980, 42–61. People have often tried to deny this, e.g. MacMullen 1981, 203 n. 34; A. Blomart, Mithra: quoi de neuf en 1990?, *JRA* 9 (1996) 435; J. David, The exclusion of women in the Mithraic Mysteries: ancient or modern?, *Numen* 47 (2000) 121–141 (not a serious contribution, in my view). The latest example, A. Griffith, Completing the Picture: Women and the Female Principle in the Mithraic Cult, Numen 53 (2006) 48–77, simply reinforces the point that women were not admitted into the cult of Mithras. Even if Gordon overstated the case regarding the elision of the female principle, the very occasional presence of female deities such as Venus or Victoria obviously, in the absence of dedications to Mithras by women, does not legitimate the conclusion that women were admitted to the cult. The Virunum album (*AE* 1994: 1334) is surely decisive here: out of 98 there is not a single woman. In this context, the contrast with the cults of Isis and Cybele, where such dedications are common, is very striking. Moreover the revisionists have themselves somehow to dispose of Pallas' claim about the hyena (ap. Porphyry, *De abstin.* 4.16.3), which they generally do with a flourish in the direction of textual corruption, thus rewriting the text to suit themselves.

[291] [The *Andumbulu* in Dogon lore were the first created people, who were like pygmies; they still live among the rocks in Mali but are invisible. Tr.]

[292] [This quotation, which generalises the situation, is inserted into the narrative of the discovery of the mask by Griaule, apparently from another context. In a footnote, he refers to the Dogon creation myth, narrated on p. 46: in early times, the Dogon believed, women had had authority over men, which is why the soul after death goes first to one's mother's family. Tr.]

the women in fact lorded it over the men, actually bullying them, and every day things got worse. If this state of affairs had gone on, men would have become the slaves of women."[293]

Investigation of the images of sex in the mysteries has to proceed indirectly, for example by looking at sensory perception, which would take me too far afield here, and anyway has already been studied.[294] Moreover, the issue of sex goes beyond the myths, which are our immediate concern, and can be found not merely in the Mithraic rejection of women but also in the occasional accounts of sexual relations, mentioned by (hostile) literary sources, considered improper for the adherents of the mysteries.

For those aspiring to admission, the process of learning about the place of mankind in the world involved a period of preliminary preparation during which part of the mystery was revealed. This is one aspect of a wider Hellenistic-Roman interest in wisdom or understanding (*gnosis*), which became a central theme in philosophico-religious speculation of the time. Access to the supreme being, to the One, could be attained by many routes, such as philosophy, divination, magic, mythology, initiation into the mysteries, and so on. Each individual tried the route appropriate to his capacities and inclinations.[295] The mysteries were thus able to offer satisfying answers to the anxiety provoked by the central question, the meaning of life.

I have argued that the mysteries provided a theodicy that legitimated the status quo by offering to those willing to observe certain ethical norms a vision of another world after death by way of compensation for this one. However that may be, the basic message of the myths for the individual, what gave the established order of things an air of immutability, capable of overcoming chaos, and believers the feeling

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[293] The story suggested to me the idea of voluntary acceptance of female domination, a fiction rooted in male fantasies, which I have elsewhere (Alvar 1999) ironically called 'the vice of dependency'. On the Dogon belief that the female sexual parts are dead, see G. Calame-Griaule, *Ethnologie et langage: la parole chez les Dogon* (Paris 1965) 296ff.

[294] Cf. T. de la Vega, El aroma de los misterios, *DHA* 25.2 (1999) 41–54. She shows how the gradual integration of the mysteries into the cultural context of the Graeco-Roman world can be traced through the connotations of the scents associated with them in literature; cf. J. Alvar and T. de la Vega, La ambigüedad cromática en los misterios, in P. Ortega, M.J. Rodríguez and C.G. Wagner (eds.), *Mujer, Ideología y Población*, ARYS 11 (Madrid 2000) 49–60.

[295] Cf. A.J. Festugière, Cadre de la mystique hellénistique, in *Aux sources de la Tradition Chrétienne. Mélanges Goguel* (Neuchâtel 1950) 74–85, offers a schematic but marvellously clear and richly nuanced account of the development of mysticism.

of being able to cope with their anxieties, was that everything is under divine control, and that it is in this that existence finds its meaning. Way beyond the issue of biological reproduction, the mysteries gave their adherents an irrational sense of things hanging together that took away the bitterness of the thought that we are merely creatures alive in the world. Small comfort no doubt in the face of the other central anxiety that I turn to next.

3. The World Beyond

> Un Andoumboulou du nom de Golominé avait une fille, Mêrê, mariée avec un nommé Atamou. Un jour, le dieu Amma, qui peut prendre toutes formes et qui n'est pas connu des autres êtres, amena une vache chez les Andoumboulou et la leur proposa. À Mêrê, qui en demandait le prix, Amina répondit: «Je la vends pour la Mort». Le femme, dans son ignorance, accepta le prix et conduisit la vache à sa maison. Atamou, son mari, mourut peu après et, Mêrê, comprenant alors ce qu'était le prix demandé par Amma, se rendit auprès de lui pour lui rendre la vache. Amma refusa. La mort se répandit alors chez les Andoumboulou.
>
> Griaule 1963, 56

> Δίδου … τὸ τοῦ βίου πέρας ἄλυπόν τε καὶ εὐδόκιμον μετὰ τῆς ἀγαθῆς ἐλπίδος τῆς ἐπὶ τῇ παρ' ὑμᾶς πορείᾳ.[296]
>
> Julian, *Or.* 5. 180c

My main argument, reviving a major theme of the old grand narrative, has been that a soteriological promise was of fundamental importance in the oriental cults. I have briefly explained the problems involved in defining exactly what that salvation consisted in. But what we cannot reconstruct is the complex of beliefs regarding the world beyond this one. We have nothing comparable to the Christian controversies over the nature of eternal life. In our case, the dispute is limited to the question whether the mysteries really did posit a life beyond the grave closely calibrated with the fulfilment of the individual's religious and

[296] "Grant … that the close of my life may be painless and glorious, in the good hope that it is to you, the gods, that I journey!" (tr. W.C. Wright).

moral obligations. The debate concerns the meaning of the notion of salvation, σωτήρια or *salus*, used in Classical texts in relation to the gods of the mysteries.

There has been an intense debate over whether σωτηρία or *salus* relate to one's fate after death. Briefly stated, the issue is whether the offer of salvation was understood as happiness in the course of one's life after initiation, or as a promise of hope after biological death. Walter Burkert has flatly denied this:

> The Frazerian construct of a general 'Oriental' vegetation god who periodically dies has been discredited by more recent scholarship. There is no evidence for a resurrection of Attis; even Osiris remains with the dead…There is a dimension of death in all of the mystery initiations, but the concept of rebirth or resurrection of either gods or *mystai* is anything but explicit (1987, 75).

This view seems to me quite mistaken. Let us take the evidence cult by cult. As regards Isis, the implications of the well-known account of Lucius' initiation into the mysteries of Isis, despite its deliberate reticence, have seemed to most scholars quite indubitable:

> *Igitur audi, sed crede, quae vera sunt. Accessi confinium mortis et, calcato Proserpinae limine, per omnia vectus elementa remeavi; nocte media vidi solem candido coruscantem lumine; deos inferos et deos superos accessi coram et adoravi de proximo.*[297]
>
> Apuleius, *Met.* 11.23

So clear, indeed, that the discussion has revolved mainly around the cult of the Phrygian gods and Mithraism.[298] But it worth remaining with the Egyptian cults for a moment. The relation of these divinities to destiny was of course extremely complicated. Isis is herself destiny, in that she represents the cosmic order (through her association with

[297] "Therefore listen, but believe: these things are true. I came to the boundary of death and, having trodden on the threshold of Proserpina, I travelled through all the elements and returned. In the middle of the night I saw the sun flashing with bright light, I came face to face with the gods below and the gods above and paid reverence to hem from close at hand" (tr. J.A. Hanson).

[298] See esp. Brenk 1993, which usefully exposes some of the weaknesses of the negative view. The continuities between pre-Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman Isis in relation to salvation have been traced by C.J. Bleeker, Isis as Saviour-Goddess, in S.G.F. Brandon (ed.), *The Saviour God. Comparative Studies in the Concept of Salvation presented to E.O. James* (Manchester 1963) 1–16; cf. M. Malaise, La survie dans les cultes isiaques, *Acta Orientalia Belgica* 3 (1983) 102–10. On the other hand, there is no evidence, positive or negative, before the time of Apuleius that Isiac salvation was thought of as other-worldly. Heyob 1975, 60–64, however, argues that there are hints of a conception similar to that of the *Metamorphoses* in the funerary iconography.

the goddess of cosmic justice and order, Ma'at) and the regularity of natural processes.[299] Hence her identification with Tyche, Fortuna, which is one of the commonest of her iconographic types (Magris 1985, 508) (Pl. 4). Isis proclaims in hexameters at Andros that δεσμῶν δ' ἀέκουσαν <ἀν>άγκαν | ἀνλύω, 'I untie the bonds of Necessity, reluctant though she be', a claim that is usually, and rightly taken to refer to the necessity of death.[300] In the 'Exchange of Moirai' text, Serapis claims that he can change men's Fates just by switching the goddesses' clothes: [τὰς] μοίρας γὰρ ἐγὼ μεταμφιάζω.[301]

Artemidorus recounts a particularly interesting story in this connection (*Oneir.* 5.94). A man who was about to undergo an operation on his scrotum prayed to Serapis. The god appeared to him in a dream and told him that he should allow himself to be operated on without being afraid, for he would be cured. But instead he died. Artemidorus says that it was his destiny not to have to bear pain, just as if he had been cured, and adds that his end was something desirable, since Serapis is a god of the underworld (he lists him in his catalogue of such gods at 2.34). He does not make fun of the god's failure but looks for an alternative explanation to validate the prediction, despite the fact that it was wrong. Less straightforwardly, we could say that, whereas both the patient and Artemidorus wanted Serapis to intervene as a saviour (cf. *Oneir.* 2.39), the truly religious interpretation, and the reason no doubt why the story reached Artemidorus' ears in the first place, would be that, in place of a mere worry about locative, here-and-now salvation, the divine boon of utopian salvation has been graciously granted. In the second half of the second century AD, both readings of the incident were possible.[302]

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[299] See for example a gilt-bronze statuette of XXII–XXIII dynasty showing Ma'at squatting in front of Isis and Osiris: Museo Egitto, Turin Cat. 514; photo in *Mostra Isìde* 54 Cat. no. II.15; cf. Griffiths 1970, 534.

[300] *IG* XII.5, 739 = Totti no. 2 = *RICIS* 202/1801 l.144f. with H.S. Versnel ap. Bianchi and Vermaseren 1982, 524. The earlier reference (l.96f.) to bonds being freed refers to the power of kings.

[301] *PBerol.* 10525 l.13 = Page, *Select Papyri* 3: 424–9 no. 96 = Totti no. 12 (III^{p}); see n. 10 above.

[302] For the terms, see n. 7 above. Vinagre 1994 has argued that Artemidorus seems to treat curative dreams sent by Serapis and Asclepius differently: the former, as a new divinity, was able to make use of new forms of publicity made possible by the spread of books, and therefore looms large in the oneirocritic literature.

However, our evidence regarding the Egyptian cults is exceptionally rich.[303] If we had the same quantity of documentation about the others there would surely have been no need to spill so much ink over the issue of salvation. In the case of the Phrygian cults, Giulia Sfameni Gasparro argues that, although no source explicitly tells us that the initiates were given guarantees of immortality, the theme was not entirely absent; however she claims that it certainly was not constitutive of this type of religion.[304] More restrictive still is the position of Ileana Chirassi Colombo, who thinks that the salvation of the soul was not a feature of the mysteries, and that the notion of *salus* was far more concrete and contingent than is often assumed. It refers primarily to an attitude to this world, based on sacrifice, performed in or for the god. It also involves coming to accept the 'impossible' world as the goal of escape from this one, as suggested by the example of Attis and the ritualism controlled by the clergy (Chirassi Colombo 1982, 326). In view of the evidence I shall be considering, this seems to me an extremely reductive account.

As for Mithras, it is Robert Turcan who has been most sceptical of the traditional idea, though in his later work he seems to have moderated his criticism (Turcan 1992a). The question revolves around the interpretation of 'the ascension of the soul', the heavenly journey mentioned by Celsus and Porphyry.[305] To put the matter simply, Turcan rejects these statements on the grounds that they are not actually from informants who were initiates into the cult but simply later claims by neo-Platonists. They are therefore not primary evidence, merely distractions. According to him, individual salvation was not a feature of Mithraism: the bull's death constitutes a once-and-for-all 'bio-cosmic' salvation. Others, such as Roger Beck (1988, 77–79; 2006, 102–12), reject this and believe that Celsus and Porphyry do tell us about actual Mithraism, but that their

[303] It is these cults too that have most evidence for benefits in this world and for divine aid. We may for example cite the miraculous triumph of Apollonius in the case brought against him for having built a temple of Serapis (Serapeum A) on Delos in the late third cent. BC (*IG* XI.4, 1299 = Longo 1969, 106–16 no. 63 = Totti no. 11 = RICIS 202/0101, with Engelmann 1975.

[304] Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 123; in eadem 1982, she comes even closer to the position of Chirassi Colombo.

[305] Celsus, ap. Origen, *Contra Cels*. 6.22 = Sanzi 2003, 416: Mithras no. 7; Porphyry, *De antro* 24 = Sanzi 2003, 422: Mithras no. 8.7.

information relates to the process of initiation in the mithraeum, and that the world beyond is not the primary issue here.[306]

I incline to think that an account of the soul's journey was given during initiation, as the sole means of presenting vividly a doctrine whose truth the initiand would later have an opportunity to experience first-hand. The ritual as performed in the mithraeum did contain some kind of soul-journey towards perfection that, according to Porphyry (*De antro* 24), took place under the guidance of Cautes. We all know, however, that initiation is an imitation of death, so it is not surprising that Mithraism should have made the point in these terms. I am attracted by the argument that there were two imaginary worlds beyond this one, one concerned with initiation and the other with the world after death. Although we have no specific knowledge of this latter, I am convinced that the Mithraists believed in it (cf. Merkelbach 1984, 244). My belief is that Mithraic initiation liberated the soul, and that this liberation had to be repeated at the point of biological death. The purificatory rituals that accompanied initiation into the different grades were intended to keep the soul unsullied for this final journey. What we cannot tell is whether this was a belief known only to neo-Platonist Mithraists with a philosophical background, or whether it was a widespread claim independent of the educational and intellectual background of the individual adherent (cf. Gordon 1988, 45).

On the other hand, the problem of Julian's allusion, at the very end of his *Banquet of the Caesars*, to Mithras' role as psychopomp, that is, his role in guiding souls to their final destiny (336c), cannot be so easily resolved.[307] Turcan, still following his argument that all this is neo-Platonist or -Pythagorean interpretation, argues that Julian's Father Mithras is not our Mithras but the syncretistic Helios worshipped by the emperor, and hence that what he says here is irrelevant for our understanding of true Mithraism.[308] We have to allow that beliefs and

[306] Beck 1996, 132 accepts salvation in the world beyond, but contrasts it with Christian salvation, without giving details.

[307] καὶ ἡνίκα ἂν ἐνθένδε ἀπιέναι δέῃ, μετὰ τῆς ἀγαθῆς ἐλπίδος, ἡγεμόνα θεὸν εὐμενῆ καθιστὰς σεαυτῷ, cf. B. Lincoln, Mithras as Sun and Saviour, in Bianchi and Vermaseren 1982, 505–23 at 506f.

[308] Turcan 1981a, 113 = 2000, 112, but see ibid, 145–52. R. Smith adopts a more moderate position in *Julian's Gods: Religion and Philosophy in the Thought and Action of Julian the Apostate* (London and New York 1995) 137, where he affirms that Julian was initiated into the Phrygian mysteries, but remains sceptical about Mithraism. He never however expresses doubts about the Mithraic character of some of the material.

cults alter under pressure of the historical reality in which they exist, it is therefore perfectly in order to think that the Mithraic conception of the world beyond may have changed over time. On the other hand, from the late second century AD Helios/Sol acquired a variety of features taken over from sun-gods with specific epithets in the same way that he assimilated aspects of other deities with solar connotations. The root of the problem of course is how we are to distinguish between the different solar cults. Everyone here draws his own more or less 'optimistic' conclusion (Liebeschuetz 1999). Julian's psychopomp may, I think, carry traces of Plutarch's mediating Mithras (*De Iside* 46, 369e), whom no one now takes very seriously because he does not seem to fit into what we know of Roman Mithraism. He was interpreted in the Cumontian tradition as a trace of the god who acted as an intermediary between the opposing poles of Iranian dualism; but it may be that Plutarch believed he had the same mediating function that he has in Roman Mithraism, namely as a demiurgic instrument of creation and salvation, and consequently, as Julian claims, a psychopomp. Plutarch locates the problem in Zoroastrianism, because of its prestige, but may in fact be referring to Mithras as a mediator of the initiate's soul, who saves it from the darkness of Hades and guides it to an eternity filled with light.

The Mithraic heaven was divided into two halves, a sort of map inscribed with coded meanings, a visible mediation between this world of mutability and death and the other of purity and immortality, where the heavenly bodies became metaphors of salvation, and astronomy an indispensable key to the ciphers.[309] As we have seen, according to Porphyry Mithras' seat was at the equinoxes, which is an intermediate position: the equinoxes are not merely the points at which the ecliptic crosses the celestial equator, but the moment when day and night are exactly equal in length all over the world. Mithras thus occupied and controlled the mid-points between the summer and winter solstices, the axes of the year. Porphyry continues in the same passage to say that Mithras therefore has north to his left and south to his right. North, which is cold, is the place of Cautopates and coming-into-being (*genesis*), south, which is warm, that of Cautes and going out of being (*apogenesis*). One of the Mithraic interpretations of the torchbearers seems

[309] Cf. Gordon 1975, 226; 1988, 49; Beck 1994, 30; somewhat differently, 2006, passim.

thus to have been that they marked the process of souls coming into being (Cautopates' lowered torch) and going out of being (Cautes with his torch raised towards heaven pointing to the gate through which the souls pass on their stellar journey to eternity, made possible by the victory of tauroctonous Mithras).[310]

I do not think it surprising that Mithras should have possessed aspects related to the beliefs of the time regarding the world after death, rooted as they were both in philosophical reflection and in current anxieties. Right from the beginning, the god was linked to justice. As guarantor of the order of the cosmos, we should think of him as presiding over destiny. If we take into account his 'heroic' aspect that was so much to the fore in the Hellenistic-Roman period,[311] we can think of him as a veritable model on whose basis men could build and attain their own salvation, in that the hold of fate over the individual, which we must assume to have been a theme in Mithraism too, could be loosened through following the cult's ethical demands. At the same time, however, Mithraism did have, as one of its many paradoxical features, a special conception of pre-destination in the form of the figure of Time (also in the form of Aion), which played a considerable, though to us completely obscure, role in its organising discourse (Pl. 8). Individual salvation may have involved a form of predestination that could apparently be overcome thanks to the initiatory process. It was this latter that overcame belief in the absolute control of Fate (Magris 1985, 508ff.).

On the other hand, Porphyry does claim, citing Euboulus as his authority, that the highest class of Persian magi abstained from eating meat on the grounds that one of their most important doctrines was metempsychosis 'which also seems to have been the case in the mysteries of Mithras'.[312] He goes on to link the association of Mithraic grades to animals to this idea. If we can believe this, salvation in Mithraism would have been correlated with the grade of the soul's re-incarnation. There is, however, no supporting evidence, which explains the extreme scepticism of modern scholars about this claim.[313] It is perfectly pos-

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[310] Cf. the useful chart given by Beck 2006, 210 fig. 13 (and pp. 209–14 as a whole).

[311] Gordon 1988, 60–64; Zwirn 1989.

[312] *De abstin.* 4.16.2 = Sanzi 2003, 418: Mithras 8.2.

[313] Particularly, once again, following Cumont, Turcan 1975, 30–33; 1981a, 112 = 2000, 111. By contrast, Merkelbach 1984, 238–42 takes it as the most natural thing in the world.

sible that Porphyry, or Euboulus, is here just attributing a neo-platonist doctrine to the adherents of Mithras, assumed to be committed to the same beliefs as the famous Persian magi, as part of a wider strategy of finding Platonist themes in barbarian wisdom.[314] On the other hand, although modern experts on Iranian religion have generally ridiculed the idea, Shaul Shaked has recently suggested, in a radical rethinking of the traditional picture of pre- and Sasanian Zoroastrianism, that there may indeed have been *mobed*s who entertained ideas of this kind, of whom Greeks under the Empire could have heard more or less reliable reports.[315] I do not think it would be surprising for a cult that believed in the descent of souls from the stars and their return also to claim that the next time around the very same souls could return to this world to be re-incarnated once more, repeating the experience of coming into being, as Porphyry says, whether or not under neo-Pythagorean influence. For the return or the eternal salvation could have been conditional each time on individual conduct, as we shall see in the following chapter.

We are here, of course, faced with a problem we have come across several times already: how far we can believe a single item of evidence? Naturally people have different views on this sort of issue, but it seems to me that in any individual case the information may be true, at least in some sense; we have, though, as here, to understand it aright. I think it perfectly possible that, as Euboulus says, some Mithraists believed in re-incarnation as a variant of a wider belief, shared by all adherents of the cult, in the continued existence of the soul after death. In the present context, what is important is that by the third century AD Mithraism accepted the existence of the individual soul, with its own continued existence after death, influenced by one's personal conduct in life, and whose fate could be decisively affected by adherence to the cult. This is how I take Tertullian's reference to the *imago resurrectionis* in Mithraism,

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[314] Bidez and Cumont 1938, 26 and 28; H. Dörrie, Kontroversen um die Seelenwanderung im kaiserzeitlichen Platonismus, *Hermes* 85 (1957) 414–435; W. Deuse, *Untersuchungen zur mittelplatonischen und neuplatonischen Seelenlehre* (Wiesbaden 1983) 129–166; A. Smith, Did Porphyry reject the transmigration of human souls into animals?, *RhM* 127 (1984) 276–284; cf. too the remarks of M. Patillon and P. Segonds in the Budé edition of *De abstin.* ad loc.

[315] S. Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation* (London 1994); idem, Popular religion in Sasanian Zorastrianism, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 21 (1997) 103–17.

which of course is denied by all those who on principle refuse to believe the information provided by this Christian apologist.[316]

In view of all this, I would argue that the issue of salvation should not be viewed in the rather black-and-white terms that it often is. For, from the point of view of the mysteries, initiation and death formed a single process or trajectory, so that it is perfectly legitimate to think that salvation could have both locative and utopian aspects. This may be the point to refer again to the passage, probably from Plutarch's *De anima*, cited in the previous section (2.2), and which we shall have to refer to yet again in relation to the ritual itself. Of course we do not know which mysteries Plutarch is here referring to, but the initiate clearly believes that, when he reaches the point of death, the experience is going to be similar to what he saw in the initiatory trance.[317] The 'ascent of the soul' was thus—as Turcan rightly argues—experienced proleptically in the mystical ecstasy of initiation and then again in the actual dark journey towards death that replicated the ritual once and for good.[318]

Given that general context, the emergence of a grade-structure (whatever its form) and the attempt (at least in Rome and Ostia) to link it with the planetary system seem to suggest that at least in some places there emerged a Mithraic journey in which the initiates entered the gates of heaven, once they had been purified from this earthly life.[319]

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[316] Tertullian, *De praescr.* 40.4 = Sanzi 2003, 414: Mithras no. 5.2. This work, like *De baptismo*, was written c. AD 200, whereas the *Contra Marcionem* and *De corona* belong to his Montanist phase, i.e. after 207; cf. Beskow 1994, arguing that Tertullian wrongly interpreted the Mithraic cave and the rock-birth as a parody of the birth and resurrection of Christ and not as authentic Mithraic rituals.

[317] Y. Vernière, Initiation et eschatologie chez Plutarque, in Ries 1986b, 335–352 argues that the vision one has as one dies was somehow reproduced in the initiatory trance. In the case of the passage of Plutarch, it is highly likely that he is talking of the Eleusinian mysteries and not of the cult of Isis, as Dunand 1973, 3: 250ff. proposed; cf. F. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit* (Berlin 1974) 132–38; Burkert 1987, 91–93.

[318] I may here refer to a couple of the studies publishd by the Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History: S. Hartman and C.M. Edsman (eds.), *Mysticism* (Stockholm 1970), and N.G. Holm (ed.), *Religious Ecstasy* (Stockholm 1982), both of which have important introductions by the editors. Cf. too W. Wainwright, *Mysticism: A Study of its Nature, Cognitive Value, and Moral Implications* (Madison 1981); M. Laski, *Ecstasy: A Study of some Secular and Religious Experiences* (Bloomington 1967).

[319] The image at the entrance to the Mitreo delle Sette Porte at Ostia is quite suggestive in this regard: it consists of an arcade of six arches with a taller seventh in the centre (Becatti 1954, 96f. with pl. XIX = V. 287). Such an image can be linked with some Campanian plaques, theatre-scenes and of course the arcade-sarcophagi, where one sometimes finds that the central niche is in one way or another especially empha-

The interference between Mithraism and *gnosis*/Platonism makes it hard to understand quite what the situation was but at the same time there is an important gain from setting the cult in the wider context of contemporary philosophical speculation.[320]

I might add that belief in the world beyond does not depend so much, in the real world, on personal religious inclinations, that is, on ideas theoretically available in the mystery context, but on what was taken as a fact in the general system of beliefs current at the time when the mysteries developed (cf. Engster 2002).

In such a case, it is the wider belief, in this context, the cultural superstructure of the Graeco-Roman social-formation, that dominates the particular, here the mysteries. In a world that frantically looked for ways of resolving the conflicts produced by human ignorance of what happens after death, it would be incomprehensible if the mysteries, and Mithraism in particular, believed in nothing after this biological existence. Even if it had been possible metaphysically, their adherents would have found it difficult to resolve the anxieties that were inevitable given that the wider culture entertained such troubling speculations about the world beyond.[321]

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sised, e.g. M. Wegner, *Die Musensarkophage.* ASR 5.3 (Berlin 1966) nos. 6 (Aphrodisias); 20 (Brussa); cf. 206 (Museo Borghese); the motif is esp. common in Asia Minor sarcophagi, but cf. also P. Kranz, Zu den Anfängen der stadtrömischen Säulensarkophage, *MDAI(R)* 84 (1977) 349–80.

[320] Turcan dismisses all the information deriving from Porphyry's sources as contaminated by neo-Platonism or -Pythagoreanism and thus of no use in telling us about genuine Mithraism (1975, 23–43). This view derives from his prior commitment to Cumont's theory of the Mazdean origin of the Roman mysteries. As Turcan himself admits, however, it is extremely difficult to discriminate here between the genuine and suppositious, given that the cult must have developed in the western part of the Empire in the second half of the first century AD. I think we should have no truck with ideas like 'pure' and 'genuine' in relation to cultural phenomena. R. Wagner, *The Invention of Culture* (Chicago 1980) is rightly critical of claims about 'purity' and 'authenticity' in this area; following on from that, I see the problem rather in terms of the invention of tradition: cf. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge 1983).

[321] One remembers in this connection the famous passage of Parmenides (28 A46 DK = Theophrastus, *De sens*. 1.3) where he describes the dead body as capable of experiencing light, cold and silence. Its extensive later echoes have been studied by R. Verdière, Le concept de la sensibilité après la mort chez les anciens, *Latomus* 50 (1991) 56–63, who sets the idea of post mortem expectations into the mysteries' cultural context; cf. Burkert 1987, 23ff. Some further reflections, not quite apposite here, but which aid in one's general thinking on these matters, may be found in H. Mathieu, Résurrection et immortalisation, in F. Jouan (ed.), *Mort et fécondité dans les mythologies. Actes*

Given this general context, it would not be surprising to find that, as Origen claims, some mystery systems accepted a belief in eternal punishment after death.[322] We need to keep in mind both the historical context, which created one complex of beliefs, and the historiographical context, which created another within the frame constituted by the first. At any rate, I think we can properly claim that the institutions that claimed to speak for the gods, that is, constituted beliefs and the imposed social order taken together, taught that it was possible to obtain a just reward for patiently enduring the world's slings and arrows, namely a marvellous experience in the world beyond. Unfortunately, this desirable condition could only be reached by dying.

The offer of eternal happiness for initiates of the mysteries emerges from the myths. Frazer thought of the evocative term 'dying and rising gods', which has become the stereotyped definition. Critics however have pointed out that this is not so much an accurate description of them as a handy way of summarising their myths. I therefore prefer to call them 'gods of death and resurrection'. We can perhaps draw a very schematic contrast between the Homeric Hades and the mysteries in this context. In Homer, the sole form of post-mortem existence is as a shade regretting no longer being alive, or thinking about what happened back there in the real world.[323] The mysteries on the other hand seem to have offered an agreeable eternity where the initiate became part of the god's company and shared his table.[324] Platonist and platonising speculations in the later Graeco-Roman world gave rise to analogous dreams (Merkelbach 1984, 228–44).The mysteries were thus fully in keeping with the collective *imaginaire* of their age, which offered themes that were taken up both by the Olympian tradition and by the new movements generated by the process of historical change.

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du Colloque de Poitiers (Paris 1986) 39–49. Note too the quite different conclusions, in the context of the Endymion sarcophagi, of M. Koortbojian, *Myth, Memory and Meaning on Roman Sarcophagi* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1995) 85–99.

[322] *Contra Celsum* 8.48; cf. F. Cumont, *Lux Perpetua* (Paris 1949) 219. Lane Fox 1988, 96 rejects the passage; in my view, though it may be contaminated with Christian ideas, it does give us a glimpse of the reality of the ideological shift that was taking place.

[323] Cf. J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford 1980) 90–95, 160–63; J.N. Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Princeton 1983); Garland 1985, 1f., 68.

[324] Garland 1985, 68–72 suggests however, on the basis of grave-goods and Musaeus ap. Plato, *Rep.* 363cd = Kern, *OF* frg. vet. 4, where the just are rewarded in Hades by being able to indulge in continuous symposia, that it was widely believed in the Classical period that one might feast, drink, play draughts, perhaps even have sex in the Underworld.

Triumph over destiny and admission to eternal felicity were however only possible through divine suffering. That is why the mysteries needed divinities who had had some experience of something like the human condition, had themselves lived historically, so that they could function as models. Their adherents might suffer pain and torment, but with the god's aid they could overcome them. Their individual successes were partial victories over destiny (and potentially over the established order) and made them worthy to join the eternal company of the gods, the true architects of absolute victory.

Some may doubt that initiates looked forward to feasting with their gods after death, but another passage from Apuleius is quite explicit on the point:

> *Nam et inferum claustra et salutis tutelam in deae manu posita, ipsamque traditionem ad instar voluntariae mortis et precariae salutis celebrari, quippe cum transactis vitae temporibus iam in ipso finitae lucis limine constitutos, quis tamen tuto possint magna religionis committi silentia, numen deae soleat elicere et sua providentia quodam modo renatos ad novae reponere rursus salutis curricula.*[325]
>
> *Metam.* 11.21.6f.

It is of course not good method to project onto the other gods what Apuleius here says about Isis. Indeed his claims here may not even have applied at other periods even to her. On the other hand, there is epigraphic evidence that suggest that I am right about salvation in the mysteries in general. Some parents request the 'fresh water' (τὸ ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ) of Osiris for their dead children, which surely expresses the hope that they shall be immortal: the water is the sacred Nile-water fetched by Osiris.[326] Another text from Rome hopes that the dead person will rest

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[325] "For (said the priest Mithras) both the gates of death and the guardianship of life were in the goddess' hands, and the act of initiation was performed in the manner of voluntary death and salvation obtained by favour. In fact, those who had finished their life's span and were already standing on the threshold of light's end, if only they could safely be trusted with the great unspoken mysteries of the cult, were frequently drawn forth by the goddess' power and in a manner reborn through her providence and set once more on the course of renewed life", tr. J.A. Hanson.

[326] The most interesting case is Lehmann and Holum 2000, 139f. no. 158 = *RICIS* 403/0401 (Caesarea Maritima, where numerous Isiac funerary images were found in the 1990s): a father addresses two of his children who died more or less simultaneously, and expresses the wish that Osiris grant them both his refreshing water. The text ends with an interesting fusion between the traditional and the new: Γῆ ὑμῖν ἐλαφρὰ καὶ τὰ κατὰ δοὺς ἀγαθά (*sic*), 'may the earth lie lightly upon you and may the lot (that Osiris) grants you in the Underworld be good'. See also *IGUR* 836 = *RICIS* 501/0164 (where the child has been taken 'not by Charon but by Chaos'); 432 = 501/0178; *CIL* VI 20616 = *RICIS* 501/0198; cf. *IG* XIV 1842 (all Rome); *SEG* IX (1944–45) 829 =

in peace with Osiris (εὐψύχι μετὰ τοῦ Ὀσείριδος).[327] That the salvation offered Lucius by Isis is not just a promise that he will be fortunate in this life once he is initiated—provided he fulfils all the requirements—but extends to the world beyond seems clear from the opening phrase: *Nam et inferum claustra et salutis tutelam in deae manu posita*.[328]

There is unfortunately no evidence for the Phrygian cults or Mithras comparable to Book 11 of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, by means of which the doubts of scholars may be quieted. If they cannot even agree about the post-mortem promises of the Egyptian cults, it is only to be expected that disagreements over Mithraism should be fiercer still. As we have already seen (p. 125), the primary literary evidence for soul-journeys in the cult, albeit rejected by Turcan, is the passage of Porphyry, *De antro* 24 that I have already cited in relation to the seat of Mithras on the equinoxes, and Origen's long citation from the otherwise unknown philosopher Celsus, to which I have already alluded several times, concerning the opposition between the fixed stars and the planetary system, represented as a 'ladder' rather than a series of concentric circles.[329] The ladder represents, inter alia 'the passage of the soul between them', καὶ τῆς δι' αὐτῶν τῆς ψυχῆς διεξόδου (cf. Beck 2006, 83f.), i.e. between earth and the fixed stars.

Apart from these texts, which one would have thought were explicit enough, much of the discussion used to revolve around what was taken to be the reading of Line 14 at Santa Prisca in Rome when the dipinti were first published by Vermaseren in 1965: *et nos servasti eternali sanguine*

RICIS 703/0111 (Carthage) with D. Delia, The Refreshing Water of Osiris, *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 29 (1992) 181–90; R. Rubio, Los isíacos y su mundo funerario, in Alvar, Blánquez and Wagner 1994, 162. At any rate down to the late Ptolemaic period, the (privileged) dead in Egypt were believed to be prepared by Isis, Nephthys and Anubis, for assimilation to Osiris, King of the Dead.

[327] *IG* XIV 2098 = *IGUR* 1042 = *RICIS* 501/0196 (lost). However εὐψυχεῖν is the standard farewell in all these texts, and does not in itself legitimate the inference that the person is to enjoy 'eternal life' in a strong sense. The notion of eternal home/dwelling occurs twice in *IGUR* 836 = *RICIS* 501/0164 (see previous n.), but this trope simply means the person is dead and will never be seen again here in the world of the living.

[328] So rightly Griffiths 1982, 202. However in his commented edition of the *Metamorphoses*, he translates: "The gates of hell and the guarantee of life were alike in the hands of the goddess…", which gives a quite false impression of both meaning and allusions (1975, 95). See also the discussion of Mimbu Kilol 1994 in support of a 'documentary' reading of Bk. 11 against the ironic Winkler-Reardon-Hägg reading (cf. n. 278 above).

[329] *Contra Cels*. 6.22 = Sanzi 2003, 416: Mithras 7.

fuso, 'You have saved us by shedding the eternal blood'. Vermaseren and Hans-Dieter Betz were of course struck by the analogies in the Christian liturgy; Turcan on the other hand saw only a once-for-all salvation in this world: the death of the bull was a unique event that liberated the demiurgic, salvific power of Mithras here on earth, which could not be repeated.[330] However Silvio Panciera showed a quarter-century ago, after the cleaning of the late 1970s, that the reading was the product of Vermaseren's wishful thinking, and bore little relation to anything that can ever have been visible on the wall. The reading *eternali* is quite impossible; every other word in the first half, including *servasti*, is very problematic; and only the phrase *sanguine fuso* at the end is reasonably certain.[331] That Mithras achieved something by killing the bull we knew anyway. The entire discussion can thus now only be viewed in the Musée de Idées Mortes.

Since then, however, another fragment of possibly relevant evidence has come to light, the prefatory note to an important inscription found deliberately concealed in a Roman cellar in Virunum, Noricum. It refers to an occasion, 26 June AD 184, on which the Mithraists organised here held a ceremony to commemorate the death of some of their fellows, among them a Father, a member of the highest grade: *qui templum vii conlapsum impendio suo restituerunt* // (added in smaller letters:) *et mortalitatis causa conven(erunt) Marullo et Aeliano cos. VI Kal. Iulias*.[332] Due to circumstances unknown to us, this ceremony coincided with the re-dedication of the mithraeum, which had been restored partly at the expense of the most prominent member, partly by contributions from the individuals named. This text is in fact the sole documentary reference from within the cult to death: there are no clearly Mithraic tomb-stones (just funeraries for Mithraic priests set up by their wives), of course no sarcophagi, and, by contrast with the cases both of the Egyptian and

[330] Vermaseren and van Essen 1965, 217; Betz 1968, 77; Merkelbach 1984, 145f.; 199. This version is still cited even by those who ought to know better, e.g. Turcan 2000, 109f. (omitting *eternali*, which anyway did not scan); Sanzi 2003, 439: Mithras no. 26.1, l.14.

[331] Panciera 1979, 103–5 note **, with the drawing on the pull-out immediately before p. 127.

[332] Piccottini 1994 = *AE* 1994: 1334, cf. R.L. Gordon, Two Mithraic albums from Virunum, Noricum, *JRA* 9 (1996) 424–26. The death of the senior Father is indicated by the usual sigle, a Greek θ in the margin beside his name. Roger Beck has argued that the date was shifted deliberately so as not to coincide with the solstice, on his view the time when souls came into the world through Cancer (1998b; cf. 2006, 84; 209–12). See also Chap. 4.5.b below.

Phrygian cults, no specifically Mithraic funerary imagery.[333] But it does suggest that the deaths of members may have been commemorated on a regular basis, thus providing an opportunity to reinforce the claim about Cautes, heat, and *apogenesis*, going out of being.[334]

With regard to the Phrygian mysteries, there is more consensus among scholars, despite the fact that there is no irrefrangible evidence for eternal salvation here either.[335] Since the days of Bidez and Cumont, a passage of Firmicus Maternus has often been cited in this connection. It describes a ritual in which the statue of a god was buried at night, the adherents sung or wailed rhythmic lamentations, and, after their throats had been anointed with oil, the priest slowly spoke the following phrase in a low voice:

> Θαρρεῖτε μύσται τοῦ θεοῦ σεσωσμένου
> ἔσται γὰρ ἡμῖν πόνων σωτηρία…[336]
>
> Firmicus Maternus, *De errore* 22.1

This salvation can only be the triumph over Destiny and the promise of a life in the hereafter markedly different from that assumed by the dominant Graeco-Roman religious system (granted that it too changed over time).[337] The phrase seems clearly to be a formulation from the mysteries, but cannot be linked to any particular cult, though it is tempt-

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[333] The absence cannot be connected with the lack of a dying god: the main funerary images in the cult of Isis are those of women wearing the 'knot of Isis': Walters 1988; J. Eingartner, *Isis und ihre Dienerinnen in der Kunst der römischen Kaiserzeit.* Mnemosyne Suppl. 115 (Leyden 1991).

[334] In ordinary professional and collegial associations, individual donors commemorated their birthdays by means of a feast supported by a foundation, not the day of their death or funeral. There is no epigraphic trace of such activity by Mithraists.

[335] There is a quite widespread desire to distinguish Mithraism from the other two cults, which, for unknown reasons, appear to bear a greater resemblance to one another.

[336] "Take heart, initiates of the god that has been saved, for there shall be salvation for us from our sufferings…." = Bidez and Cumont 1938, 2: 285 no. 3. J. Podemann Sørensen, Attis or Osiris? Firmicus Maternus, *De errore* 22, in idem 1989, 73–86, argues that the symbolon refers to an Osirian ritual, because there are parallels in the Egyptian cults for almost all the points made by Firmicus. His conclusion may be doubted, since, as he himself admits, despite our relatively good information about the Egyptian cults, there is no other evidence for this belief being current there.

[337] Cf. still the epigraphic collections by R. Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs*. Urbana Studies in Language and Literature 28.1–2 (Urbana 1942); W. Peek, *Griechische Grabgedichte*. Schriften und Quellen der antiken Welt 7 (Berlin 1960); A.-M. Vérilhac, *Paides aôroi. Poésie funéraire* (Athens 1978–82).

ing to think of a day corresponding to the *Hilaria* at Rome.[338] That is why Turcan does not make use of it, even though he does argue, on the basis of certain images, and texts by Julian and Sallustius, that Cybele and Attis promised the triumph of souls over death, that is, a return to the divine.[339] Of course no one doubts that there were marked interferences between the mysteries and Christianity during the fourth century AD; but these ideas are perfectly in keeping with the beliefs of the mysteries at this period of close contact. After all, we find Julian himself asserting that the souls of the followers of Attis, so long as they keep his commandments, can leave the world of becoming and limitlessness, and return to the gods: τί δὲ ἱλαρώτερον γένοιτο ἄν ψυχῆς ἀπειρίαν μὲν καὶ γένεσιν καὶ τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ κλύδωνα διαφυγούσης, ἐπὶ δὲ τοὺς θεοὺς αὐτοὺς ἀναχθείσης; (*Or.* 5. 169cd). I do not see how this union could take place anywhere but in the world beyond.[340]

The union with the gods takes place in the imaginary world to which Attis and his followers gain access. Many scholars do not accept this

[338] See Turcan 1982a, 317: "Le salut des fidèles est lié au salut du dieux dont ils partagent cultuellement les épreuves"; also J. Pépin, Réactions du christianisme latin à la sotériologie métroque. Firmicus Maternus, Ambrosiaster, S. Augustin, in Bianchi and Vermaseren 1982, 258–72 at 257–61. This text was referred to several times during the conference, e.g. by D.M. Cosi 1982, 489; Wedderburn 1982, 833 n. 66; R. Turcan 1982b, 185 n. 9. In his defence of other-worldly salvation in the Phrygian cults, Cosi tried to contextualise it inter alia with a not less disputed phrase from *CIL* VI 510 = *ILS* 4152 = *CCCA* 3 no. 242: *taurobolio criobolioque in aeternum renatus* (376 CE), used by the parvenu Sextilius Agesilaus Aedesius to emphasise his rightful place among these Roman aristocrats (McLynn 1996, 327f.). It is surely about time that the phrases used by the late-Roman élite ceased to be invoked as 'proof' of wide-spread value-change.

[339] Turcan 1992a, 73f.; cf.1996b, 388f, 391f. Here again, the real difficulty is the nature of the literary sources. In the second-century Naassene 'hymns' I discussed above (n. 31), Attis appears as a god active in the world, anticipating what Julian says about him in *Or.* 5. Many critics however hold texts of this kind to be of no value in studying the true claims of the cult because of the contaminations they so evidently contain. The problem is methodological. Since they had no hierarchy with the authority to condemn their opponents, the oriental cults could not possibly develop the strict criteria of modern critics who are confident they can declare Julian atypical (not to say heterodox or heretical). Let me repeat: the oriental cults in the fourth century were indeed, in part at least, as Julian says they were; but in the second century they were different, since of course they changed over time. Turcan claims: "Les sénateurs du Bas-Empire qui collectionnent ostensiblement titres sacerdotaux et initiatiques n'ont rien à voir avec le mithriacisme authentique de la grande époque, celui des II^{e} et III^{e} siècles après J.-C.": 1988, 260f. What would we call the 'grande époque' of Christianity then? I remind the reader of what I said earlier about ideas of purity and authenticity in areas such as these.

[340] I am glad to find D.M. Cosi likewise in opposition to the current minmalist trends: Salvatore et salvezza nei misteri di Attis, *Aevum* 50 (1976) 42–71; cf. idem 1986, 108ff., where he links Julian's reinterpretation to sexual continence.

because they deny Attis' resurrection, some seeing it simply as a form of living death.[341] First of all, it is worth pointing out that the offer of resurrection need not only be made by deities that have themselves experienced death and resurrection: to deny the resurrection of Attis is not to show that his followers could therefore not have received any promise of a blessed existence in the world to come. That said, we may consider the terms of the denial. At one time people objected to the Frazerian category 'dying and rising gods'.[342] Others claim the idea of resurrection is simply a calque on Christian ideas. The real problem, to my mind, is to discover the true nature of the resurrection. Christ regained his human body, and the Church affirms belief not only in the eternal life of the soul but the resurrection of the body, on the model of Lazarus in the Gospel (John 11.1–46). According to the myth of Attis, however, his immortality was signalled by the perpetual wiggling of his little finger and the fact that his hair never stops growing. This is a completely different conception of immortality from belief in bodily resurrection. However, it is no less absurd to claim that Attis is just a zombie than it is to think that the myth deliberately formulated a charged symbolic image such as this merely in order to suggest that what awaits the initiate beyond the grave is an unreal existence, which therefore cannot be. Conceptually, no doubt, it is easier to imagine the world beyond with the same body as one had in life and in which one committed the sins that prevent the believer from proceeding straight to heaven and oblige him or her to spend time unwillingly in Purgatory.

Among the other arguments is the absence of a cyclical repetition of Attis' resurrection (e.g. Sfameni Gasparro 1983, 227). It is difficult to understand this, for the repetition of the mystery of death and resurrection, even in Christianity, only occurs in a ritual context (quite unlike the cases of Prometheus or Sisyphus, for example). At the (later) *Hilaria*, the community of believers celebrated the god's resurrection, even if it was only expressed in such apparently trivial signs as his finger and his hair, and they knew that the next year the festival would repeat his passion and resurrection, with its processions and dramatic

[341] E.g. Sfameni Gasparro 1983, 227. But note the fine remarks on the resurrection of Attis and its potentiality by Musso 1983, 141ff.

[342] E.g. B. Allo, Les dieux sauveurs du paganisme gréco-romain, *RSPT* 15 (1926) 5–34; L. de Grandmaison, Dieux morts et ressucités, *RcSR* 17 (1927) 97–126; G.C. Ring, Christ's Resurrection and the Dying and Rising gods, *CBQ* 6 (1944) 216–229; K. Prümm, I cosidetti 'dei morti e risorti' nell' Ellenismo, *Gregorianum* 39 (1958) 411–39.

performances that Christian writers so scorned. One can only say that modern scholars evidently have greater difficulties than believers in antiquity in accepting a resurrection whose function was to bring them close to god. In fact, a scholar like Pieter Lambrechts accepts that Antoninus Pius' reform (if that is what it was) extended not just to the rituals, such as the introduction of the *taurobolium/criobolium*, and organisational details, such as the introduction of the Archigallus, but also to the belief-system, since it is only from that point on that Attis is to be found in the literary and epigraphic evidence, which, in his view, can hardly be a coincidence.[343] It is only after Antoninus Pius that Attis is found as a god of life and resurrection, calqued no doubt on the ideas of rebirth and *renovatio* current at the time, a context which well fits the introduction of a day, the *Hilaria*, to celebrate the god's resurrection (Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.21).

However, the objections raised against regeneration in the Phrygian mysteries really stem from the quite inacceptable requirement that a myth be totally transparent to analysis. The vagaries of imaginative productions such as these inevitably mean that they resist straightforward interpretation. To resort to the same logic, the doubtful resurrection of Attis is the result of his doubtful death: we can say that this more or less dead zombie more or less comes alive again, as can be inferred from his apotheosis, through which he grants his followers a new order. The fact that there are no explicit literary texts about the hypothetical renewal of life procured by the god can be partially compensated by the archaeological evidence. On the interesting fourth-century silver salver in repoussé work from Parabiago, for example, which I have already mentioned (Pl. 5), Attis is seated next to Cybele in the conveyance drawn by lions, in what seems to me incontrovertibly an image of the hierogamic procession, with three Corybantes armed with dagger and shield dancing around them.[344] It is Attis, actually, who is holding the

[343] Cf. Lambrechts 1962, 20–52, supported by Fishwick 1966. The Mainz *defixiones* now strongly suggest that Attis was a significant deity long before Antoninus Pius (see nn. 130, 131 above).

[344] The early scholarship dated it to II^{p}, e.g. A. Levi 1935, 6–10 and C. Albizzati, La patera argentea di Parabiago, *Athenaeum* 15 (1937) 190, followed by Vermaseren 1966, 27–30 [claiming that it is the lid of a box]. Most later commentators however rightly prefer the IV^{p}, e.g. K. Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art* (New York and Princeton 1979) 185f. no. 164; L. Musso 1983, 106; H. Beck and P. Bol (eds.), *Spätantike und frühes Christentum: Katalog* (Frankfurt a.M. 1983) 531 fig.138; J.M.C. Toynbee and K.S. Painter, Silver Picture-Plates of Late Antiquity: AD 300–700, *Archaeologia* 108 (1986) 15–66 at 29f.; H.G. Gundel, *Zodiakos: Tierkreisbilder im Altertum*

reins, which, his supposed zombie-state notwithstanding, tells us that it is he who is directly in control of the entire scene. Its symbolism is very relevant here because, according to Julian, Attis is for ever ὑπουργὸς τῇ Μητρὶ καὶ ἡνίοχος, the servant and charioteer of the Mother, 'ever led upwards as though from our earth'.[345] The *adventus* of the divine pair is framed by heaven, represented by Helios and Selene, and earth, symbolised by the four groups of figures at the bottom. To the right is recumbent Tellus with the cornucopiae, accompanied by two Horai who are attracting her attention to the procession. In the centre are four more Erotes connoting the seasons, and below them two marine deities, presumably Neptune and Thetis. On the left is another recumbent female figure holding a river-reed and lying on an amphora: she must recall the birth of Attis on the banks of the river Sangarius, whose daughter Nana conceived him after eating a nut from the almond-tree that grew from the blood that flowed from the torn-off testicles of Agdistis. On the centre-right of the dish, over against the divine pair, is a complex symbolic representation of Time. An Atlas emerges up to his waist out of the ground; on his head he wears, in the manner of Hercules, a cap made from a lion's mask. He is bearing the weight of a vast circle, which must represent the ecliptic, the apparent path of the sun around the earth, inside which there stands a young man, half-draped

(Mainz 1992) 260 no. 190; Turcan 1992a, 74. I find the arguments of Musso quite convincing: "Il tipo iconografico di Cibele sulla quadiga tirata da leoni in compagnia di Attis conosciuto unicamente attraversi le emissioni della prima serie di contorniati (tra il 365 e il 394), la presenza de Sol Invictus radiato su quadriga…secondo una 'versione' iconografica favorita nel IV secolo…la pertinenza dei confronti silistici istituibili con altri argenti datati alla seconda metà del secolo (ad es. il missorio di Teodosio I)…concorrono a far ascrivere la fabbricazione del piatto di Parabiago ad età non anteriore alla metà circa del IVsecolo d.C." (p. 106). The decisive indication is surely the gesture of Helios as he drives his chariot, which seems to be unknown before mid-III^{p}. I concede however that the issue of the date is not quite settled: Jackson 1994, 153f.; LeGlay 1981, 404 no. 20 ['date discutée'], and, more significantly, Elsner 1998, 209 with fig. 136 [colour], all remain undecided. Vermaseren too: both in 1977, 69 and 72f., and in *CCCA* 4, 107 no. 268, he simply declines to come down on one side or the other. Whether either Jackson or Elsner was aware of Musso's work may be doubted, however; the others could not have been. As for the point about hierogamy, cf. Levi 1935, 8; Musso 1983, 12.

[345] Julian, *Or.* 5. 171c (tr. W.C. Wright). As Turcan 1996b, 397f. remarks, the allusion to the chariot must evoke the myth of Plato's *Phaedrus*; on p. 403 he argues that for Julian, drawing on the *Timaeus* and Aristotelian cosmology, the individual soul is congruent with the World Soul, indeed they are in a sense consubstantial.

and holding a sceptre, who is generally interpreted as Aion.[346] To the right of this group is a gnomon with a snake swarming up it.

The salver, which measures 39 cms in diam. and weighs 3.55 kg, seems to have been found in a grave, where it had been placed over the mouth of a wine-amphora containing ashes. In the same tomb was found a silver-plated bronze knife (Levi 1935, no. 5). Taken together, the finds suggest that the owner of the tomb may have been himself a *gallus*, a self-castrated devotee of the goddess. That might also explain the use of imagery taken from other cults, if so it be. In my view, the fact that he had himself buried with such a precious object suggests that he believed in the omnipotence of the divine pair who are shown in an eternal process through the universe. Cosmic order replaces the chaos caused by Agdistis; Attis takes the reins of life after death for his followers who have passed through the initiatory tests, including castration if need be, and are committed to following him like a cortège of Corybantes.

At the end of this rather detailed discussion of the conception of life after death in the oriental cults, it should be clear that the differences between scholars derive more from a priori considerations than a disinterested analysis of the evidence. It is however only human to think that the evidence fits one's own ideas better than those of other people. A further problem is the role of Christianity both in the selection of the primary evidence and in the minds of scholars, so that the ancient debates re-echo, of course in different forms, in modern discussion. I would like to think that my arguments have shown that the oriental cults, as relatively autonomous religious formations, planted the issue of the world beyond in the collective *imaginaire* of the inhabitants of the Empire during the first four centuries of the Common Era. The surviving evidence does not of course allow us to reconstruct the vision of each mystery in detail, but we can assume that all gradually altered under the pressure of changing circumstances. Christianity too kept working away at its version of what happens after death without succeeding in giving it a fixed form until the Church established a

[346] LeGlay 1981, 404 no. 20, noting that his hand is near Aries, the first sign of the zodiac; Beck 1988, 56 n. 131. Apart from the items in LeGlay's bibliography, note G. Zuntz, *Aion im Römerreich. Die archäologischen Zeugnisse*. SB Akad. Heidelberg (Heidelberg 1991) 35ff.; G. Casadio, From Hellenistic Aion to Gnostic Aiones, in D. Zeller (ed.), *Religion im Wandel der Kosmologien* (Zurich 1999) 175–90; idem, s.v. Aion, in Jones 2005, 1: 207–210.

hierarchical organisation capable of imposing a single authoritative account. Since nothing similar happened in the case of the oriental cults, we cannot construct a version for them that looks as finished as that of Christianity.[347] Nevertheless, there seems to me sufficiently hard evidence to allow us to make a start. In my view, those initiated into the oriental cults believed that, thanks to a once-and-for-all divine act, they could attain a blessed afterlife available only to those who participated in the rituals that provided the requisite knowledge, and provided that they lived in accordance with the ethical norms approved by the gods. We shall look at the content of these rules in the following chapter.

[347] Note in this connection the interesting book by J. Amat, *Songes et visions. L'au-delà dans la littérature latine tardive* (Paris 1985) where the author looks at the construction of the Christian hereafter from the angle of the dream-work of the dead, the angels, demons, and journeys to the next world that give us details about the Paradise people longed for. If the oriental cults ever created such dense images, the relevant information has been almost wholly destroyed by those same Christians. On the arbitrary ways in which the information we do have has been used, mainly in relation to the cult of Isis, see Brenk 1993.

CHAPTER THREE

SYSTEMS OF VALUE

Nobody sees Death,
Nobody sees the face of Death,
Nobody hears the voice of Death,
Savage Death just cuts mankind down.
Gilgamesh XI.vi. tr. Dalley 1989, 108

Sacrificium est . . . corpus etiam nostrum cum temperantia castigamus
Augustine, *De civ.Dei* 10.6[1]

The aim of this chapter is to collect the scattered evidence for what might add up to the system of values of these cults. Those who believe that they constituted merely one modality within the larger pagan system will of course see no point in such a quest.[2] I am convinced however that, given the context of the Empire's market in religious options, they were a response to the anxieties generated by a shift in the religious paradigm, a shift whose underlying cause, as in the Cumontian grand narrative, was the incapacity of the politicised religion of Rome to meet the needs of the diverse population of a complex and multi-cultural empire.

The oriental cults evidently did not offer their solution as an alternative cultural model. Christianity on the other hand did gradually construct such a paradigm, which we tend to see as more finished right from the start. In fact, however, the process took centuries of struggle towards a Christian self-definition vis-à-vis the world, and of

[1] "Our body too [is] a sacrifice when we chasten it by temperance" (tr. P. Schaff).

[2] Emblematic of such a view are Erwin Rohde's remarks à propos the adherents of Dionysus: *Psyche: Seelenkult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen* (Freiburg and Leipzig 1894 (1898², repr. Darmstadt 1961) 391. He claims that once the ceremonies were over no profound trace of them remained in the hearts of these ecstatics, who received no impulsion to alter their conduct, no change of heart. He surely thought the same about all the other mysteries. Generally relevant here is the ancient construction of highly-coloured moral invective against opposing individuals and religious groups, esp. mysteries, which would have been pointless if the latter had had no ethical norms, explicit or implicit: R.M. Grant, Charges of Immorality against Various Religious Groups in Antiquity, in Van den Broek and Vermaseren 1981, 161–70.

internal confusion, until a uniform pattern emerged.[3] The impression of coherence is the result of a process of intellectual and physical cleansing that has removed the sophistries and blood from the history of the Early Church. Such a process was quite foreign to the oriental cults, although they did experience changes both in their systems of belief, as we have seen, and in their rituals, which we shall look at in the next chapter; and their values too must surely have adjusted slowly to historical change. Unfortunately the evidence is simply inadequate to allow us any insight into such shifts over time, and we must be content with the more modest task of filling in the main outlines of their ethics within the wider cultural context, and considering how their adherents responded to divine injunctions. The aim is thus to provide a preliminary sketch-map of morality in these cults.

On the authority of Cicero, who translated Greek ἠθικός as *moralis*, we ordinarily treat morality and ethics as synonymous terms. In some contexts, however, the words need to be differentiated. Foucault for example has this to say about the word morality:

> By 'morality' one means a set of rules and values through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies such as the family (in one of its roles), educational institutions, churches and so forth. It is sometimes the case that these rules and values are plainly set forth in a coherent doctrine and an explicit teaching. But it also happens that they are transmitted in a diffuse manner, so that, far from constituting a systematic ensemble, they form a complex interplay of elements that counterbalance and correct one another, and cancel each other out on certain points, thus providing for compromises or loopholes. With these qualifications taken into account, we can call this prescriptive ensemble a 'moral code'. But 'morality' also refers to the real behaviour of individuals in relation to the rules and values that are recommended to them: the word thus designates the manner in which they comply more or less fully with a standard of conduct; the manner in which they obey or resist an interdiction or prescription; the manner in which they respect or disregard a set of values.[4]

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[3] Cf. the excellent account of Lieu 2004.

[4] Foucault 1985, 25. Foucault's work must be approached with caution, as the feminists have shown. But it does at least set up a model that can be criticised, cf. the abundant information, debate and bibliographies in e.g. Goldhill 1995; D.H.J. Larmour, P.A. Miller and C. Platter (eds.), *Rethinking Sexuality: Foucault and Classical Antiquity* (Princeton 1998). On a quite different tack, J. Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford and New York 1993) offers a densely-written review of the relevant currents of Greek thought and its influence on modern morals and ethics, with discussion of many points relevant to my project here.

Ethics however is a practical attitude of mind committed to constructing a coherent pattern out of various existential values.[5] Such an effort will obviously be heavily determined by the cultural attitudes that influence behaviour at the level of attitude rather than action. Actions will of course be prefigured by attitudes in such a way that "knowing 'how to act' as a member of a community in the ancient world… was inseparable (with the exception of an insignificant number of individuals) from the practice-and-belief of religion" (Gordon 1979a, 19). Religion provides a set of moral values in keeping with the surrounding social conditions, thus predisposing individuals to behave in accordance with a particular set of ethical values.[6] There is however yet a third aspect here, which I would have liked to examine if the evidence had been there, namely the role of the individual in constructing ethical or moral conduct (here the terms can again be used interchangeably). As Foucault says:

> A rule of conduct is one thing: the conduct that may be measured by this rule is another. But another thing still is the manner in which one ought to 'conduct oneself'—that is, the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject acting in reference to the prescriptive elements that make up the code… The *determination of the ethical substance* […] is [..] the way in which the individual has to constitute this or that part of himself as the prime material of his moral conduct… There are also possible differences in the forms of *elaboration*, of *ethical work* (*travail éthique*), that one performs on oneself, not only in order to bring one's conduct into compliance with a given rule, but to attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one's own behaviour.[7]

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[5] Cf. J. Vidal, Rite et ritualité, in Ries 1986b, 53. T. Rendtorff puts it succinctly: "Ethics is the theory of the conduct of human life": *Ethics. 1: Basic Elements and Methodology in Ethical Theology*; *2: Applications of an Ethical Theology*. Transl. K. Crim (Philadelphia c. 1986–89) 1: 3.

[6] Cf. W.A. Meeks' formulation: "Morality names a dimension of life, a pervasive and, often, only partly conscious set of value-laden dispositions, inclinations, attitudes, and habits" (1993, 4).

[7] 1985, 26f. emphases in the original. His view here seems to me close to that of Meeks: "I take 'ethics' in the sense of a reflective, second-order activity: it is morality rendered self-conscious; it asks about the logic of moral discourse and action, about the grounds for judgement, about the anatomy of duty or the roots and structure of virtue…" (1993, 4). However one also needs to bear in mind the more restrictive view described (but not shared) by Hans-Dieter Betz: "Ethics as a term tends to be defined either on the model of modern ethical theory as a general and scientific theory of moral obligations, or on the model of classical philosophical ethics as a rational system of moral virtues necessary to bring raw human nature up to the level of *eudaimonia*. If these are the only admissible definitions of ethics, primitive Christianity did not and could not have had such ethics" (1978, 2f.).

The voluntary decision to join an existing group of initiates that, as we shall see, possessed a set of moral rules in some tension with the wider cultural context presupposes that the individual had recourse to this third level, necessitating the development of the notion of a conscience, and thus making him personally responsible for his actions. Initiation was understood not as a nice little ritual but as the expression of a deep religious conviction. This surely satisfies the conditions for us to be able to speak of morality, ethics and values in the wider sense in the context of these cults. However what we have here is not an ethos, understood as a set of beliefs and attitudes characteristic of a social group. It is neither a set of maxims derived from 'folk morality' nor a psychotherapeutic vademecum developed by some philosopher (cf. Betz 1978, 2f.). It is rather a complex and dynamic construction that drew on both popular ethics and philosophical injunctions, and thus created its own rich moral world.

But of course the oriental cults did not exist in a vacuum. If they were able to offer alternatives to the dominant paradigm, it is because there was a demand for them. From the late Hellenistic period, but mainly in the Principate, some 'sacred laws', to say nothing of the famous text at Epidaurus, and the Hippocratic Oath, required not merely physical purity but also an undefiled mind.[8] Ritual lustration was increasingly taken to connote, and presuppose, moral integrity.[9] The Samothracian mysteries had the reputation of making their initiates εὐσεβεστέρους καὶ δικαιοτέρους καὶ κατὰ πᾶν βελτίονας (Diod. Sic. 5.49.6).[10] One of the best-attested cases is the well-known prescriptions of a private cult-association at Philadelphia in Lydia, dated to the late second, or early first centuries BC.[11] Dionysios, the leader of the group, claims

[8] Cf. J.N. Bremmer, How Old is the Idea of Holiness (of Mind) in the Epidaurian Temple Inscription and the Hippocratic Oath?, *ZPE* 142 (2002) 105–07, citing nine parallel formulations, the earliest from the first century CE. Bremmer shows that the traditional fourth-century BC date for the Oath and the temple-inscription cannot be correct.

[9] A. Chaniotis, Reinheit des Körpers—Reinheit des Sinnes in den griechischen Kultgesetzen, in J. Assmann and T. Sundermeier (eds.), *Schuld, Gewissen und Person* (Gütersloh 1997) 142–79.

[10] Cf. S. Guettel Cole, The Mysteries of Samothrace during the Roman Period, *ANRW* II.18.2 (1989) 1564–98 at 1577; and eadem 1984, 31, critical of Karl Lehmann's claim that there was a confession of sins in this cult before ἐπόπτεια.

[11] *Syll*. 985 = F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées d'Asie mineure* (Paris 1955) 53–58 no. 20, with the now somewhat out-dated commentary by Barton and Horsley 1981, itself complementary to the study of the gods listed in the inscription by O. Weinreich, Stiftung und Kultsatzungen eines Privatheiligtums in Philadelphia in Lydien, *Sitzungs-*

as his authority dreams sent to him by Zeus (ll. 4 and 12f.), who was apparently the main divinity worshipped.[12] The rules themselves, mainly concerned with the interdiction of sexual contact outwith marriage, but also of abortifacients and love-charms, bear a family resemblance to the so-called 'confession texts' from the same general area.[13] Members seem to have been required to swear an oath to abide by them. In case of disobedience, offenders are threatened with divine hatred and dreadful punishment (μεγάλας . . . τιμωρίας περιθήσου[σιν: l. 49f.).

The text's main interest in the present connection, however, is the insistence on purity of heart and mind, as a duty and service to the gods. The goddess Agdistis, the moral guardian of the association, is asked to engender [ἀγαθὰς] διανοίας ἀνδράσι καὶ γυναιξὶν [ἐλευθέροις καὶ] δούλοις (ll. 52–4), the good disposition and moral judgement that makes it easy to keep the rules. This innocence of mind is to be made visible to all at the monthly meetings for sacrifice, when the members are required physically to touch the inscription to show that they have kept the rules (ll. 54–60).[14] This practice is evidently modelled on the local form of ordeal: those who perjured themselves were inviting the gods to punish them; those who refused to touch the inscription were as good as confessing that they had failed to keep to the rules.

During the same period, philosophy was occupied in creating a body of reflection on such matters. A *sententia* by Seneca hints at the way an individual, even a slave, should involve himself in the creation of a personal moral character, as a sort of dynamic assault on destiny:

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berichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Heidelberg, phil-hist. Klasse 1919 no. 8 (Heidelberg 1919) 1–68.

[12] The word used for the group is οἶκος, which at the same time seems to refer to a room in Dionysios' house, where the group met: Barton and Horsley 1981, 15f. The association was open to men and women, slave and free (Borgen 1994, 58). Perhaps for that reason particular attention had to be paid to sexual purity (cf. δόξηι τῆι ἀρίστηι, l.2).

[13] G. Petzl, Die Beichtinschriften im römischen Kleinasien und der Fromme und Gerechte Gott, *Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vorträge G355* (Opladen 1998); A. Rostad, Confession or Reconciliation? The Narrative Structure of the Lydian and Phrygian 'Confession Inscriptions', *SymbOslo* 77 (2002) 145–64; A. Chaniotis, Under the Watchful Eyes of the Gods: Divine Justice in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor, in S. Colvin (ed.), *The Greco-Roman East* (= *Yale Classical Studies* 31) (Cambridge 2004) 1–43; A. Rostad, *Human Transgression—Divine Retribution*, diss. Bergen 2006. Remarkably enough, Barton and Horsley fail to make this connection.

[14] Barton and Horsley 1981, 14 n. 30 also stress the unusual expression used in this connection: ὅσοι πιστεύουσιν ἑαυτοῖς (l. 56), for which they prefer the translation 'those who have confidence in themselves'.

Sibi quisque dat mores, ministeria casus adsignat.[15] The anti-Christian publicist Celsus unfavourably compares Jesus' announcement that sinners were welcome in the Kingdom of God (Matth. 7.7; Luke 19.6) to the practice of the mysteries:

> οἱ μὲν γὰρ εἰς τὰς ἄλλας τελετὰς καλοῦντες προκηρύττουσι τάδε· ὅστις χεῖρας καθαρὸς καὶ φωνὴν συνετός, καὶ αὖθις ἕτεροι· ὅστις ἁγνὸς ἀπὸ παντὸς μύσους καὶ ὅτῳ ἡ ψυχὴ οὐδὲν σύνοιδε κακόν, καὶ ὅτῳ εὖ καὶ δικαίως βεβίωται.[16]

We find similar sentiments being adduced nearly two centuries earlier by Philo, who claims that it is unthinkable that the truly sacred should be defiled with ἀνιέροις θυσίαις, i.e. sacrificial offerings made by those who are have sinned.[17] It has been argued that such views are in fact old, and go back ultimately to the formulations and injunctions of sacred laws, perhaps even in Archaic times.[18]

Since the members of these initiatory communities lived in the wider society, it was the cultural values of the latter that to a large extent determined their ethical demands.[19] Indeed, it must be granted that the moral system propounded by these cults was closely bound up with the general morality of the society they hoped to succeed in. The aim of initiation was not to cut the individual off from social life or to turn him into an outsider, a sort of Timon of Athens. Quite the reverse: their aim was integration, since otherwise they would not merely enjoy

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[15] "Each individual acquires his moral character for himself: chance allots his duties": Seneca, *Epist. mor.* 47.15, in the context of a discussion about relationships between master and slave; the previous sentence reads: *non ministeriis illos aestimabo, sed moribus*; cf. O. Tescari, Echi di Seneca nel pensiero cristiano e viceversa, *Unitas* 2 (1947) 171–81; I. Hadot, *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung* (Berlin 1969); U. Domínguez del Val, El senequismo de Lactancio, *Helmantica* 23 (1972) 291–323.

[16] "Those who summoned persons to participate in mystery-rites proclaim the following: Whoever has pure hands and who speaks intelligibly (i.e. is of sound mind; or perhaps: speaks Greek); yet others utter this proclamation: Whoever is pure of all taint and whose mind is conscious of no ill and who has lived a good and righteous life": ap. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.59; cf. Julian, *Or.* 7.29, 239c.

[17] *Spec. leg.* 1.270 discussing *Numbers* 19.1–10.

[18] See the discussion by Dickie 2004, 579–90.

[19] I use the word 'community' with some reservation in this context, since it is extremely difficult to say much about either the structure or the permanence of groups such as the *dendrophori* or the *pastophori*, a task I do not attempt here. I have deliberately preferred to present a rather idealised picture of associations founded on common values. On the difficulty of defining religious communities in antiquity, see the useful comments of Belayche 2003; cf. North 2003, stressing the role of personal choice, and, by implication, loose affiliation.

no cultural influence but would end up by dying out.[20] They might be superficially different from the dominant paradigm, but ultimately their content was determined by the historical context.[21]

Since neither a discussion of such matters nor any general statement by initiates survives from antiquity, we are not in a position to decide whether the moral system in each case (itself a creation over time) borrowed from an independent or prior system. In my view, the individual myths had their own moral content, which could be adapted in different ways in different periods depending on the historical circumstances; it is this content that the Christian apologists attack. However I also believe that the values I postulate altered as the oriental cults shrugged off their image as exotic outsiders and became a means of transforming paganism. I shall be looking at this in due course, insofar as the surviving evidence permits.

It is not my intention here to examine the principles of the Roman moral system, the value-system to which these cults had to adapt themselves (even if they did develop their own ethics in some areas). According to Mario Vegetti, "the impromptu quality, socially and culturally speaking, of the processes of being brought up and becoming a moral subject in antiquity meant that there was plenty of opportunity for uncertainty and conflict, and thus of choice and freedom unknown in other social systems".[22] In fact this freedom applied mainly to the realm

[20] We may here observe that it was the temple of Isis and not any of the prominent temples in the Forum of Pompeii that were restored after the devastating earthquake of AD 62. *CIL* X 846 = *ILS* 6367 records that the decuriones were glad enough to elect the donor's son N. Popidius Celsinus to a seat on the council despite his tender age (6 years). "The honor also shows the political influence wielded by devotees of Isis in the town at this date": Zanker 1998, 126f. Much the same can be said about the array of Isiac statues at Athens from c. AD 50 until the end of II^{P}: Walters 1988, 59 with Appdx. III; 2000, 87–9.

[21] This must be the explanation for the similarity between Plutarch and Christian ethics that so surprises some people that they take to postulating an improbable and undemonstrable Christian influence on the Chaeronean sage. It would in fact be far more sensible to assume that the Christian writers were drawing on the 'folk morality' available to them, which itself derived from the oral dissemination of philosophical teachings (Betz 1978, 8). I myself think that the philosophers were often simply giving a special twist to a common fund of moral sentiments shared by themselves and their contemporaries, pagan and Christian. Wolf Liebeschuetz, on the other hand, has well examined the subtle links between Roman religion and its moral implications, which were not understood by most people (1979, 39–54).

[22] *L'etica degli antichi* (Rome and Bari 1989) 5. On the basis of an impressive amount of evidence, this book argues the thesis that the true constants over the longue durée are happiness and virtue. He deals with the oriental cults along with a series of

of the imagination, since the rules ended up by being quite restrictive, if not perhaps as restrictive as in a society where morality was in general stricter.[23] It is anyway clear that societies are not equally repressive all down the line: in many ways, though not all, the rules are tighter for those who do not enjoy the privilege of belonging to the hegemonic order.[24] Everywhere however there are escape-mechanisms, that is, supplementary or sub-cultural value-systems, which help to sublimate the differences and allow the individual a degree of self-awareness in liminal areas. They are escape-routes that make it possible to bear living in a stiflingly enclosed world by offering alternatives to the model set up by the cultural norm.

These contrasting but complementary systems created a good deal of ambiguity, which makes interpretation still more difficult.[25] Where our information is more abundant, the ambivalent metaphors may sometimes allow us to gain some idea of what is merely tacit, what does not need to be, or cannot be, said; but when every scrap of evidence is scrutinised under a microscope for its quantum of truth, as in the

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alternatives to the traditional system on pp. 304ff., though without any special points relevant to my purpose here.

[23] J.G. Griffiths, *The Divine Verdict. A Study of Divine Judgement in the Ancient Religions.* Suppl. *Numen* 52 (Leyden 1991) 45–109 argues in favour of the idea of a Greek moral law (and, *mutatis mutandis*, a Roman law) with divine sanction. This is a completely different way of conceptualising the problem of morality and its reinforcement from that adopted by the work cited in n. 27. Griffiths' style of argument is admittedly old-fashioned, but we can agree that explanations of human misfortunes, especially illness, poor harvests, famine and so on were regularly couched in religious terms, as punishments for individual or collective wrong-doing, cf. recently G.E.R. Lloyd, *In the Grip of Disease: Studies in the Greek Imagination* (Oxford 2003); and we shall have occasion below to note one or two instances in relation to Isis. Since health and prosperity were the goods regularly requested from the divine world, and it was a foundational belief that piety led to good fortune, it is inevitable that their being withheld should be considered a result of impiety, i.e. some sort of wrong-doing. The general function of the oracular system was to provide the information required, at every level, to sort out such muddles.

[24] On the difference between Roman and modern conceptions of 'public' and 'private', see K. Cooper, Closely Watched Households: Visibility, Exposure and Private Power in the Roman *Domus*, *Past & Present* 197 (2007) 3–33.

[25] The introduction of new cults into Rome and the polymorphism of its relations with the divine obviously increased the range of religious modes and experiences available. This was not so much a matter of individual choice (which seems to me a typical liberal myth) as of the mobility of deities facilitating their claim to universal authority and range. But see Hopkins 1999, 82.

case of the oriental cults, there is hardly room for such non-verbal perception, social or cultural.[26]

It is also not easy to say precisely what the dominant cultural norm was. According to L.R. Lind the ten basic ethical values, at least as regards Roman morality, were *fides*, *officium*, *prudentia*, *constantia*, *utilitas*, *diligentia*, *religio*, *pietas*, *fortitudo*, *virtus*. These notions were in their various ways deeply embedded in social praxis.[27] One or two comments are called for here. These values were in fact those of an upper-class male Roman.[28] That is surely why there is no specific reference to sexual morality, which, by contrast, is one of the best-documented areas in the moral thinking not only of the Romans but also of all cultures (and religions).[29] In order to tackle the concept of *virilitas* one would naturally

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[26] The situation in the case of early Christianities is quite different. I much admire the way Meeks 1993, 37ff. deals with the problem. On p. 216, he brilliantly defines Christian ethics as a polyphony, by which he means the apparently contradictory values developed by (Christian) communities over time. I see this less as a principle than as an inevitable and universal consequence of historical change, as I shall try to establish in the course of this chapter.

[27] L.R. Lind, The Idea of the Republic and the Foundations of Roman Morality: 1, in C. Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History*, 5. Collection Latomus 206 (Brussels 1989) 5–34; idem, ~ 2, in C. Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History*, 6. Collection Latomus 217 (Brussels, 1992) 5–40. C. Skidmore, *Practical Ethics for Roman Gentlemen. The Work of Valerius Maximus* (Exeter 1996) 53–84, extracts from Valerius Maximus the following nine virtues: *virtus*, *moderatio*, *continentia*, *verecundia*, *severitas*, *pietas*, *aequitas*, *constantia*, *gratitudo*. See also G.G. Belloni, Note sulle virtù romane, *Aevum Antiquum* 1 (1988) 181–192, who picks out a rather narrow group, based on the list of those that were divinised and actually worshipped: *libertas*, *ius* and *iustitia*, *aequitas*, *fides*; A. Michel, La vertu n'est-elle qu'un mot? in P. Dumont (ed.), *Problèmes de la morale antique* (Amiens 1993) 123–31. Other 'virtues' have been studied from a variety of points of view, e.g. H. Wagenvoort, Pietas, in idem, *Pietas: Selected Studies in Roman Religion* (Leyden 1980) 1–20; H.I. Marrou, *L'idéal de la virginité et la condition de la femme dans la civilisation antique* (Paris 1953) (both typical of their time); virtues in the ancient novel: G. Schmeling, Manners and Morality in *Apollonius of Tyre*, in P. Liviabella Furiani and A. Scarcella (eds.), *Piccolo mondo antico* (Perugia 1989) 197–215. It is often thought that there was a sharp difference between the morality of Early Christianity and the pagan environment. Meeks 1993, 68ff. argues, quite to the contrary, that there was in fact a considerable overlap between some pagans and some Christians. Here, obviously, it is all a matter of which texts one cares to use, that is, of the subjective views of the historian. I think Keith Hopkins and I share a good deal of common ground here (1999, 201 n. 46).

[28] Cf. now R.M. Rosen and I. Sluiter (eds.), *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity*. Penn-Leiden Colloquium on Ancient Values, 1. Mnemosyne Suppl. 238 (Leyden 2003); M. McDonnell, *Roman Manliness: Virtus and the Roman Republic* (Cambridge 2006).

[29] Think of Martial, for example, whose jokes allow us to trace what at first sight seems a fuzzy line between good and evil in his ethical perspective, well discussed in a series of publications by Marguerite Garrido-Hory, La vision du dépendant chez

have to look at the discourse of the body and the very formal nature of sexual relations, both of them areas that were avoided in the older literature.[30] Attitudes to what Foucault calls the *aphrodisia*, and other aspects of the notion of *virilitas*, naturally shifted over a man's lifetime. By contrast, the virtues connected with the realm of sexual morality, among them *pudicitia*, *castitas*, *pudor*, *concordia* in marriage (one of the meanings of the *dextrarum iunctio* at the marriage ceremony), and even *amor* affected women directly. All this is clearly expressed in the literary and epigraphic evidence for *laudationes* and *consolationes*.[31]

Foucault has claimed moral thinking about pleasure in antiquity neither developed nor tried to develop a codification of acts, nor was there any hermeneutics of the subject in this area. What it did do was to stylise an existential aesthetic:

> The relation to truth [in Platonic discourse] was a structural, instrumental and ontological condition for establishing the individual as a moderate subject leading a life of moderation; it was not an epistemological

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Martial à travers les relations sexuelles, *Actes du XI^e colloque du GIREA, Kazimierz 1980*, in *Index* 10 (1981) 298–315; La femme chez Martial, *Hommages R. Fietier*, París, 1984, 301–311; *Juvénal: Esclaves et affranchis à Rome* (París 1998); Femmes, femmes-esclaves et processus de féminisation dans les oeuvres de Martial et de Juvénal, in AA.VV. 1999, 303–314. There are however several different ways of studying Roman sexuality, cf. the excellent collection by Hallett and Skinner 1997; R. Langland, *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge 2005).

[30] Cf. J. Walters, Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought, in Hallett and Skinner 1997, 29–43, who comes to the same conclusions as Garrido-Hory in the 1980s. Much the same can be said about R.A. Pitcher, Martial and Roman Sexuality, in T.W. Hilliard et al. (eds.), *Ancient History in a Modern University, 1* (Cambridge 1998) 309–15, written in complete ignorance of the work of Garrido-Hory, and whose results are less complete and less systematic than hers.

[31] Cf. the Augustan texts known as the *laudatio Murdiae* (*CIL* VI 10230 = *ILS* 8394) and ~ 'Turdiae' (*CIL* VI 1517 = *ILS* 8393), cf. W. Kierdorf, *Laudatio funebris. Interpretationen und Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung der römischen Leichenrede* (Meisenheim am Glan 1980, with an important section on virtus; F. Gascó, in L. García Moreno, F. Gascó, J. Alvar and F.J. Lomas, *Historia del mundo clásico a través de sus textos, 2* (Madrid 1999) 129ff. As for *consolationes*, note esp. the texts of Seneca and Plutarch, and the *consolatio ad Liviam*: ed. H. Schoonhoven, *The pseudo-Ovidian Ad Liviam de morte* (Groningen 1992). All stress the range of duties open to a woman in the Empire and are good sources for studying my theme here. On a related topic, the conceptualisation of marriage and the social role of women, see G. Williams, Some Aspects of Marriage Ceremonies and Ideals, *JRS* 48 (1958) 16–29; J. Gagé, *Matronalia*. Collection Latomus 60 (Brussels 1963) 100–53; K.R. Bradley, Ideals of Marriage in Suetonius' *Caesares*, *Rivista Storica dell'Antichità* 15 (1985) 77–95; Grubbs 1994 (cf. p. 404 n. 60 below); R.D. Brown, *Lucretius on Love and Sex: A Commentary on* RN *IV.1030–1287*. Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 15 (Leyden 1987) 122–27. On the expression of love in economic terms through testaments: E. Champlin, *Final Judgements: Duty and Emotion in Roman Wills, 200 BC–AD 250* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1991).

> condition enabling the individual to recognize himself in his singularity as a desiring subject and to purify himself of the desire that was thus brought to light.

This is schematic, but will do. By contrast in Christian ethics great significance was attached to "two opposite yet complementary practices: a codification of sexual acts that would become more and more specific, and the development of a hermeneutics of desire together with its procedures of self-decipherment".[32] This is Foucault's grand narrative in *The History of Sexuality*, vols. 2–3.

On the other hand, Lind's rather academic list is very selective. They are taken exclusively from a specific type of literary production. What does it mean to claim that these were the main or central values of the Roman citizen? They really amount simply to Valerius Maximus' affirmation of the paradigm of good-natured seriousness on the part of the dominant groups.[33] Moreover the terms are understood in a purely lexical fashion and assume extensive translatability. There is little sense of the dynamics of such concepts and their role in social negotiation and the maintenance of 'face'.[34] Moreover we need to distinguish between what Robert Kaster terms 'dispositional' and 'occurrent' uses of behavioural words.[35] Getting at the values of the dominated is still more tricky, because there is no point in projecting onto the entire population of the Empire the ideologically-driven moral aspirations of the dominant class. It is to be hoped that these silenced voices may gradually be recuperated by dint of patient analysis of sayings, refrains, fables and graffiti: such work will enable us to describe attitudes that were often enough quite different from those that feature in accounts

[32] Foucault 1985, 89 and 92.

[33] Cf. W.M. Bloomer, *Valerius Maximus and the Rhetoric of the New Nobility* (Chapel Hill 1992) 22–25,184–229; P. Combès, *Valère Maxime, Livres I–III* (Budé) (Paris 1995) 20–46.

[34] Note A.M. Eriksen, Redefining *Virtus*: The Settings of Virtue in the Works of Velleius Paterculus and Lucan, in Ostenfeld 2002, 111–22; cf. Pliny the Younger's account of *honestas*: N. Méthy, *Les lettres de Pline le Jeune: Une représentation de l'homme* (Paris 2007).

[35] Kaster 2005, 24–27, though terms need to be transposed slightly for 'virtues'. He defines 'dispositional' as a general sensitivity to 'appropriate' situations, and 'occurrent' as particular experiences in particular situations. The book's stress on the dynamics of emotions and the relevant 'scripts' could rewardingly be applied to virtues. Note esp. the excellent analyses of *pudor*, understood as an emotion (ibid. 28–65), and *integritas* (134–48).

of the moral thinking of the élite.[36] Nevertheless, one has to start somewhere, and for all its abstraction Lind's list is a useful aide-mémoire of the topics I shall be discussing in this chapter.

1. Between Utopia and Reality

> ὅ τοι πτερόεις ἔρριψε Πάγασος
> δεσπόταν ἐθέλοντ' ἐς οὐρανοῦ σταθμούς
> ἐλθεῖν μεθ' ὁμάγυριν Βελλεροφόνταν
> Ζηνός
>
> Pindar, *Isthmians* 7.44–47[37]

As will now be clear, I believe the oriental cults developed their own ethical norms, though for lack of documentation we are hardly in a position to recuperate them.[38] One or two scraps of information however do provide grounds for the claim that they developed their own ethical models, quite aside from purely aesthetic matters.[39] In the case of the cult of Mithras, there is a fragmentary line from the mithraeum of S. Prisca on the Aventine: *…perlata humeris [- -] m[a]xima divum*, which must mean something like '(bear) the commands of the gods on (my or your) shoulders to the very end'.[40] Whatever the precise meaning, the

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[36] For one promising approach, see the paper by the late J. Cascajero, Historia Antigua y fuentes orales, *Gerión* 17 (1999) 13–57, with the earlier bibliography.

[37] "Indeed, winged Pegasus threw his master, when Bellerophon desired to enter the habitations of heaven and the company of Zeus" (tr. W.H. Race).

[38] Cf. Pleket 1981; cf. Henrichs 1984.

[39] R. Rubio, La propaganda de la estética: símbolos exóticos del individuo en la difusión de los misterios orientales, in J. Alvar, C. Blánquez and C.G. Wagner, (eds.), *Formas de difusión de la religiones antiguas*. ARYS 3 (Madrid) 219–30.

[40] Vermaseren and van Essen 1965, 204f. no. 9 = Sanzi 2003, 439: Mithras no. 26.1. The reading is, as so often with Vermaseren, conjectural. His reading of the complete line is: *Atque perlat(a) humeris t[u]li m[a]xima divum*. According to V., this is a pentameter, which is impossible. For it to be a perfect metrical hexameter, as it otherwise appears to be, we would need three long syllables in the fourth foot, for which there is no space—indeed even his *t[u]li* seems to me quite imaginary. To my mind, we should assume 1) a short word here such as *tibi* (i.e. at Mithras' command), and 2) that there were two feet before *perlata* (the reading *atque* is very uncertain). As for the word *maxima*, V. concluded that it meant 'commands', whereas Sanzi translates literally 'le cose più importante'. It is unclear whether the sentence is a first-person utterance by Mithras or by a Mithraist; either way, it would be unique among the lines at S. Prisca. If it is an utterance by Mithras, the primary reference would be to carrying the bull on his shoulders before killing it. This would confirm Cumont's belief that Mithras received a command to kill the bull. If it is an utterance by an adherent, identifying himself with the god, the metaphorical meaning would be primary.

implication is that the source of morality is the divine will, and that it is the individual's moral duty to act in accordance with this will. Then there is what Hermes is made to say to Julian at the end of the *Caesares*: δέδωκα τὸν πατέρα Μίθραν ἐπιγνῶναι· σὺ δὲ αὐτοῦ τῶν ἐντολῶν ἔχου…, 'I have granted (you) to know Mithras the Father: (it is your task to) keep his commands in mind' (336c). The word ἐντολή also occurs in Christian moral contexts implying the demand for moral purity.[41] In my view, it is irrelevant here that Julian uses the name Mithras fairly systematically also to refer to his syncretistic solar deity: this deity was a composite of various other solar deities, so that the cult of Mithras may well have contributed this item to the wider concept.[42]

We can also, I think, adduce the fact that the oriental cults were sometimes mocked in performances of mimes, and in festival processions.[43] Outsiders laughed at their gods, the very basis of the norms governing their conduct; and at the very fact that they were looking for alternatives to standard rules. Ordinary people thus experienced a brief sense of liberation in making fun, in the presence of believers, of what the latter felt to be sacrosanct. In such cases, laughter is mainly evoked by what is, culturally speaking, experienced as oppressive. Since the adherents of the oriental cults did not find their gods oppressive, they of course did not find the mockery funny. We have no evidence of initiates' reaction, but there is a passage from Clement of Alexandria that may give us a hint:

> For since all forms of speech flow from mind and manners, there would be no mockery if there were no mocking mimes…So if comedy (τοὺς γελωτοποιούς) is to be ejected from our society, we ourselves ought not to stir up laughter. For it would be absurd to imitate things we are not allowed to hear; and still more absurd for a man to set about making himself a laughing-stock, that is, the butt of insult and derision. For if we could not endure to make ourselves ridiculous, as we see some do in processions (ἐν ταῖς πομπαῖς), how could we bear to have the true,

[41] E.g. Justin, 1*Apol.* 16.6; 66. The word is very common in *NT*: W.F. Moulton and A.S. Gedes, *A Concordance to the Greek Testament*[3] (Edinburgh 1926/1953) s.v.; cf. *TWNT* s.v. ἐντολή.

[42] Contra: Turcan 1981a, 118 = 2000, 118.

[43] Cf. Tertullian, *Spect.* 23.3; Arnobius, *Adv. nat.* 4.36. C. Panayotakis, Baptism and Crucifixion on the Mimic Stage, *Mnemosyne* 50 (1997) 302–19; R. Lim, The 'Temple of Laughter'?: Visual and literary Representations of Spectators at Roman Games, in B. Bergmann and C. Kondoleon (eds.), *The Art of Ancient Spectacle* (New Haven and London 1999) 343–65.

> inner person ridiculed to one's face? And if we should never, of our own freewill, exchange our own face (πρόσωπον) for a more ridiculous one [i.e. wear a comic mask]….
>
> *Paedag.* 2.45.1–3 Marrou-Mondésert[44]

There were, then, implicit norms of behaviour as well as standardised ones, though they were not necessarily written down. If this were not the case, the gods' role as judges, which I mentioned earlier as part of the rites of initiation (in connection with the World Beyond, or the selection of candidates by those same gods for initiation), would be unintelligible. We have to assume a scale of values applying to an entire initiatory community, not simply as a characteristic ethos but as a true ethical norm that determined the conduct both of individuals and of the group as a whole. In my view, Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* Bk. 11 shows us Lucius' progress towards recognition of such a norm. Of course such values, even more than myth, are subject to historical change within a specific historical formation. The aim of the regulation of social relations is to maintain the integrity of the group. Since such regulation affects every aspect of social life, some rules will be quite general (what some people think of as 'natural prohibitions', such as the prohibition of murder or adultery), others will be a function of circumstances. These are the group's values, i.e. the behaviour collectively approved or disapproved. During the course of their integration into the group, the initiands learn how to recognise these, so that the extent of an individual's adaptation to the rules is also an index of his socialisation into the group.[45] If we accept that there were groups of initiates that existed over time and whose members took part corporately in specific religious activities, it follows that such groups must have established norms of behaviour. As Meeks observes: "The construction of the community and of moral norms is a single, dialectical process" (1993, 213). It is the community that controls and disciplines its members to make sure they adhere to the rules based on the general moral principles, and maintain ethical norms.

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[44] The entire chapter is eloquent, and chilling, testimony to the kill-joy efforts of Christian leaders.

[45] On the socialisation of the dominant class at Rome, see for example W.M. Bloomer, Schooling in Persona: Imagination and Subordination in Roman Education, *ClassAnt* 16 (1997) 57–78.

Everyday life however produces problems, both as regards the degree of acceptance of the values as a whole and in respect of their practical application. The passage of time, the number of people involved, the authoritative assertion by others of values or behaviour not in accord with the internal norms, all these will bring about changes and the development of new values. If it is only a matter of one or two, they can co-exist with the accepted forms. In fact all moral systems happily develop contradictory values; the individual can thus emphasise, positively or negatively, the one that fits his immediate needs or that may serve him as a general guide to living. Looking at the relevant information provided by our documentation might provide interesting results in this connection.

Coming as they did from different parts of the eastern Mediterranean, our cults brought a variety of cultural baggage with them, all of course heavily conditioned by their integration into the Graeco-Roman context. The values implicit in their myths might overlap to some degree with the ethical norms dominant in the culture they aimed at settling in; however, the specific ways in which appropriate behaviour was inculcated were obviously different. This can be seen, for example, just by looking at any of the versions of the myths of Isis and Cybele. It is therefore impossible, as well as unnecessary, to attempt to draw up a scheme of values common to all three. However it might be worth stressing that at least sexual abstinence seems to have been a shared value; perhaps it was felt that such renunciation made the individual more receptive to the divine. At any rate, initiation was preceded by the implicit or explicit obligation that one refrain from sexual contact.

In relation to Mithraism, it is sufficient to recall the gender exclusivity of its adherents, to which I have already referred (Chap. 2 n. 290 above). Surprisingly enough there was no female counterpart to the male Mithraist (as the 'Normal Female' to the 'Normal Male').[46] In this context, masculinity was so positively marked that Mithras' obvious indifference to women was reproduced in the social world of the cult.[47] This however had nothing to do with the rejection of marriage

[46] 'Normal Male/Female' are terms used by H.N. Parker, The Teratogenic Grid, in Hallett and Skinner 1997, 47–65.

[47] Note Bourdieu's point that in what he calls 'rites of institution' what is important is not the passage or transition itself but the nature of the imagined 'line' that is crossed. The true boundary is between those in principle eligible for the ritual and those who are not (2001, 176).

or family-bonds: there are many votives *pro se et suis*, sons were often introduced into the cult by their fathers, and there are at least a handful of tomb-stones of Mithraic office-holders put up by their wives (Clauss 2000, 39). The exclusion of women from the cult was mainly a matter of taking Mithras as a model for one's religious life.

It is relevant here that some Graeco-Roman novels have been interpreted, among things, as coded initiations into marriage and sexual relations,[48] taken as metaphors for initiation into the mysteries themselves.[49] In Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, for example, the socially-acceptable aim in this context, marriage, is presented in terms of an initiation into the mysteries.[50] Initiation into the mysteries of Eros is the *telos* both of Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* and Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, and likewise presented in terms closely modelled on initiation into the regular mysteries.[51] It also represents Chloe's exposure to the licentious

[48] It is obvious that marriage was positively marked in Roman ideology, not merely from a political perspective but also because the family bond was held both to keep society together and ensure its continuity through the blessing of children, cf. Montserrat 1996, 80ff.; S. Dixon, The Sentimental Ideal of the Roman Family, in B. Rawson (ed.), *Marriage, Divorce and Children in Ancient Rome* (Oxford 1991) 99–113; eadem, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore 1992); P. Veyne, La famille et l'amour sous l'Haut-Empire Romain, *Annales ESC* 33 (1978) 35–63; S.M. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* (Oxford 1991).

[49] I refer of course to the provocative and much-debated thesis of Merkelbach 1962, that the novels are a genuinely mystic form of literature, their plots patterned on the initiatory experience. Some may be reminded here of the claims about the origin of tragedy made by Gilbert Murray, F.M. Cornford and Jane Harrison. Analogous claims have been made for the influence of Eleusis on Greek lyric poetry: R. Garner, Mules, Mysteries and Song in Pindar's *Olympian* 6, *ClassAnt* 11 (1992) 45–67. Others have picked up Merkelbach's basic points but pursued them more indirectly, e.g. M.J. Hidalgo, La novela griego como vehículo de propaganda religioso, in Alvar, Blánquez and Wagner 1993, 197–214; S. Lalanne, Hellenism and Romanization: A Comparison between the Greek Novels and the Tale of Psyche in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, in Ostenfeld 2002, 225–32; from the point of view of genre: Konstan 1994. In my view, Merkelbach's claims are marked by an incomprehensible desire to turn all the novels into romans à clef. Allegory is a catching ailment.

[50] Beck 1996, 145. Foucault 1986, 228f. argues likewise that the Greek novel is grounded in a 'heterosexual' relation marked by a male-female polarity and an insistence on sexual abstention "modelled much more on virginal integrity than on the political and virile domination of desires". In his view, the "fulfilment and reward of this purity is a union that has the form and value of a spiritual marriage". Such a view is obviously very dependent on the Plutarchan view that in marriage to desire is a higher good than to be desired: τὸ γὰρ ἐρᾶν ἐν γάμῳ τοῦ ἐρᾶσθαι μεῖζον ἀγαθόν ἐστιν (*Narr. amat.* 23, 769d). According to Foucault (1986, 179–85), the late first century AD saw the rise of a different type of erotic ideal from that generally followed in Greek culture prior to that time, while retaining certain older constants; Plutarch's aim is to synthesise Plato's two types of love into a single Eros. Cf. too Goldhill 1995, 158.

[51] Longus: "As the final sentence reads, Daphnis enacts (ἔδρασε) what his initiatrix Lycaenion had taught (ἐπαίδευσε) him and Chloe learns (ἔμαθεν) that what had hap-

world of male sexual violence in terms of initiation.[52] Whatever the precise relation between the ancient novel and the mystery-cults, it seems clear that in each the motif of a real or imaginary journey or transition was used to convey the idea of social integration, in the specific form, say, of marriage. The safe accomplishment of this journey, in which the ethical qualities of the heroes/protagonists were heavily stressed, turned them into ideal ethical models. Such models were there to be imitated both by readers and by adherents of our mysteries, disposed as they were to become morally irreproachable, not merely by their own efforts but also with the aid of divine grace.[53]

It must however be said that every-day life meant that it was quite impossible to fulfil all the ethical demands theoretically made by these cults (Alvar 1993a). Their adherents suffered the usual vicissitudes that are the lot of human-beings. Whatever resolutions they made at the high points of mystical devotion, the troubles of everyday life outweighed the forces of utopia. In other words, it was often impossible to attain the ideal.[54] Nevertheless I do believe that there was an element of utopian illusion in these cults, deriving from the symbolic 'rebirth' achieved through the initiate's symbolic death. Submission to this ritual seems to imply acceptance of an utopian project implicit in the adoption of a new set of religious practices, or what might nowadays be called a new religious 'identity'.[55] The change of name practised by some initiates can be read as a desire to make such a new identity explicit, the moral transformation being figured in the new name.[56] This is not the place

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pened in the woods had been mere child's play (παίγνια)": Beck 1996, 145 n. 61; Achilles Tatius: H. Morales, *Vision and Narrative in Achilles Tatius'* Leucippe and Clitophon (Cambridge 2004).

[52] J.J. Winkler, The Education of Chloe: Hidden Injuries of Sex, in idem, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York 1990) 101–26. Winkler's argument is rightly criticised by Goldhill as one-sided (1995: 33–45).

[53] See my further remarks in Chap. 4.4.b.ii below.

[54] One might compare the Qumran community, which jealously guarded its revealed wisdom, accessible only to those who had managed to complete their spiritual transformation: D. Dimant, The Self-Image of the Qumran Community, in A. Berlin (ed.), *Religion and Politics in the Ancient Near-East* (Bethesda 1996) 93–103. On the variety of motives for permanent sexual continence in Judaism, note P.W. van der Horst, Der Zölibat im Frühjudentum, in W. Kraus and K.-W. Niebuhr (eds.), *Frühjudentum und Neues Testament im Horizont biblischer Theologie*. Wiss. Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 162 (Tübingen 2003) 3–14.

[55] For a fine account of the construction of a specifically Christian identity out of a predominantly Jewish one, see Lieu 2004.

[56] Cf. G.H.R. Horsley, Name Changes as an Indication of Religious Conversion in Antiquity, *Numen* 34 (1987) 1–17. One or two cases have been noted in the case of the

to start a discussion of the religious significance of theophoric names, or of pseudonyms, nicknames or *agnomina* as evidence of religious conversion, which requires independent treatment.[57] It is enough here to say that such usages may in any given case be evidence of a desire to mark becoming a new man, one capable, thanks to initiation, of overcoming the 'vices of the world'.

Becoming a new man seemed necessary because of our mysteries' project of establishing a new ethical and moral order, not of course for the society as a whole but as a corollary of the truths they asserted. But they had in practice to differentiate between the aim and the actual changes they could accomplish. Even during the initiatory process the individual's hope for radical moral change was conditioned by the real possibilities open to him. And afterwards in most cases everyday life gnawed away at the experience until nothing was left. Reality inevitably imposed itself as the condition under which life had to be lived even by initiates. They did not form a group out of this world, cut off from links with their society, but were all the while integrated into the life of their cities, taking a full part in social life.

This problem has of course been much discussed from a different point of view, namely conversion.[58] The discussion has revolved around the question of whether initiates into the mysteries experienced a form of conversion. As so often, there is not much evidence from antiquity on this point. The positions taken up by scholars thus tend to reflect

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cult of Isis, e.g. Witt 1971, 307 n. 39; 311 n. 16; 321 n. 55; Malaise 1972a, 29. Of all changes of names to mark a change of status, the most famous for a Spaniard is the re-naming of Don Quixote's horse, Rosinante, though unfortunately its result was the opposite of what was intended: "And so, after having composed, struck out, rejected, added to, unmade, and remade a multitude of names out of his memory and fancy, he decided upon calling him Rocinante, a name, to his thinking, lofty, sonorous, and significant of his condition as a hack before he became what he now was, the first and foremost of all the hacks in the world" (tr. J. Ormsby).

[57] See the brief but important remarks of R.C.T. Parker, Theophoric Names and the History of Greek Religion, in E. Mathews and S. Hornblower (eds.), *Greek Personal Names: Their Value as Evidence* (Oxford 2000) 53–79.

[58] Nock, 1933 flatly denied the possibility of true conversion outwith Christianity, since it was only in that context that the convert was required to reject other deities, and acceptance of the postulate of a single divinity became a decisive criterion of the authenticity of a change of heart. More recent discussions from the point of view of the sociology of religion include: B. Kilborn and J. Richardson, Paradigm Conflict: Types of Conversion and Conversion Theories, *Sociological Analysis* 50 (1988) 1–21; C. Ullman, *The Transformed Self: The Psychology of Religious Conversion* (New York 1989); L. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven 1993); A. Oksanen, *Religious Conversion. A Meta-Analytical Study* (Lund 1994).

their a prioristic assumptions. Since the best-known case is that of the fictional Lucius in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, he has tended to be the focus of interest.[59] His change of view with regard to the order of the cosmos and the powers that regulate it, and to the moral claims made upon him, quite apart from the change in his ritual life (which is not at issue here), are sufficiently explicit for us to conclude that he did experience a transformation or change of heart, which we have no trouble in locating within the semantic range of our word conversion. It is a different matter if we insist on a strict definition of the word in the direction of exclusivity, which is really only appropriate to the hegemonic claims of Christianity, eager as it was to avoid any contagion from an earlier mode of religiosity. The case of Lucius, which I take to be typical of many other initiates, did not involve the abandonment of other religious practices: initiation was understood as a means of deepening earlier religious experiences. We might therefore consider it to be not so much a conversion experience as a mystical option within the religious system, a specialised version of henotheism (Bradley 1998, 331). There is no simple solution here, since a great deal depends on what one considers conversion to involve. If we take the 'mystical' tack, it surely is the case that what we may characterise as henotheistic tendencies were something new in Roman religious practice, involving a new way of conceiving divinity, which we might call 'henotheistic conversion'. Henotheism did not involve rejection of the other gods but claimed unequivocally that the god in question was superior to all others. Such a claim surely amounts to a true conversion.

However that may be, in my view the oriental cults, with their mystery component, became so integrated into the society of the Empire that from a fairly early point the members were not recruited through conversion or selection but through family membership: they were largely the children of the families where this type of religiosity was

[59] For the debate since Nock, I refer to the careful discussion of Shumate 1996. Note also the replies to R. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire AD 100–400* (New Haven 1984) and idem, Conversion: A Historian's View, *The Second Century* 5 (1985–86) 67–81, by W. Babcock, MacMullen on Conversion: A Response, ibid. 82–89; M. Jordan, Philosophic 'Conversion' and Christian Conversion: A Gloss on Prof. MacMullen, ibid. 90–96. Other recent treatments: A. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia 1987) 21–28; E. Gallagher, *Expectation and Experience: Explaining Religious Conversion* (Atlanta GA 1990) 109–33; M. Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford 1994). T.M. Finn, *From Death to Rebirth: Ritual and Conversion in Antiquity* (Mahwah NJ 1997) can cheerfully be ignored.

favoured.[60] If that were the case, the significance of the issue of conversion would be greatly reduced. There is another point too in the same connection. Although these cults clearly did have their own accounts of the real world (which the convert would tend to prefer), their degree of integration with the wider culture makes it very difficult for us to differentiate meaningfully between the various systems.[61] To return to the issue of conversion, it may be hard to define the term strictly, but it certainly ought not to be confused with religious exclusivism, which is characteristic only of one type of conversion, a type that there is no reason to take as more authentic than others, or more universally valid. The idea that the goodness of one deity far exceeds that of others, and the worshipper's preference for that deity, can perfectly well be interpreted, for example in the case of Lucius, as amounting to a henotheistic conversion. Where we do find substitutions, they are partly based on analogy—the antagonism of neighbours—and partly competitive: henotheism feeds on ambiguities of this kind, which make it very difficult to interpret such cases correctly. A case in point is the re-cut inscription on the front of a very small marble cippus found in 1912 in the pronaos of the mithraeum beneath the outer substructures of the Antonine Baths, where the name of Serapis has been replaced by that of Mithras: εἷς Ζεὺς | Μίτρας | Ἥλιος | κοσμοκράτωρ | ἀνείκητος.[62] The case is made more complicated by the fact that there is another inscription on the reverse, this time a regular invocation of Zeus Helios

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[60] Cf. R. Wiegels, Die Rezeption orientalischer Kulte in Rom—Umriß eines Forschungsfeldes zum Thema: Religion und Gesellschaft in römischer Zeit, *Freiburger Universitätsblätter* 65 (1979) 37–61; J. Alvar et al., La religiosidad mistérica en el espacio familiar, *ARYS* 1 (1998) 213–25.

[61] The final section of Nancy Shumate's book argues that the world Lucius ends up by joining is culturally quite different from that of Rome. Well though I think of the remainder of her book, such a conclusion is surely quite misguided.

[62] *AE* 1913: 118 = V. 463 = *IGVR* 194a = *RICIS* 501/0126 (first quarter III^{P}). According to Ghislanzoni 1912, 323, the cutter first wrote ΜΡΑΣ (this and the T for Θ perhaps suggests some unfamiliarity with the name). The fact that the re-cutting was actually over the name Serapis was first noticed by L. Canet ap. Cumont 1919, 319; cf. Cumont 1929, 79 fig. 5. This face is taken to be the front of the cippus because the moulding is on that side. The stone is very small and easily transportable; in my view it originally came from elsewhere before being re-used. Many of the hypotheses that have been suggested in this connection seem to me quite implausible, based as they are on unargued, and arbitrary, assumptions: Nock for example suggested (1925, 89) that it provides evidence of a sort of *damnatio memoriae* in connection with the murder of the philo-Egyptian Caracalla; following Cumont 1929, n. 37, Simon 1978, 468 suggested that it is to be understood as evidence of a certain rivalry between the cults of Sarapis and Mithras. I am sceptical (see n. 66 below).

Sarapis, where the name of Mithras has been inserted near the end, evidently prompted by the epithet ἀνείκητος.[63] The cemented pit in the centre of the floor of this mithraeum (1.90m deep), and the subterranean connecting passage to the adjoining room, which are unique in the cult of Mithras, might indicate that this part of the substructures of the Baths had in fact previously been used by another, wealthy cult.[64] In my view, the likeliest explanation of the cippus in its present form is that an individual made two different attempts, at a time (say the second third of the third century AD) when Mithras was widely understood as a demiurge and kosmokrator on a par with Zeus, to convey this understanding in terms already established for solar Serapis.[65] This may also be the best explanation for the presence of busts of Serapis

[63] *IGVR* 194*b*: Διὶ Ἡλίῳ μεγάλῳ Σαράπιδι σωτῆρι πλουτοδότι (sic) ἐπηκόῳ εὐεργέτῃ ἀνεικήτῳ Μίθρᾳ χαριστήριον. There is now a sharp division over the interpretation of this text between those who work on the Egyptian cults and those who work on Mithras: Malaise 1972a, 465; Vidman 1970, 148; *RICIS* 501/0126 all claim that ΜΙΘΡΑ here is the name of the dedicator, evidently seduced by the name of the Isiac priest in Apuleius, *Metam.* 11.13, 15 etc., which they always cite. However this is a desperate remedy, because, epigraphically, the personal name seems always to be Mithres, not Mithras (for example, of the 19 cases of the name listed by M. Bang in the name-index to *CIL* VI, irrespective of his absurd system of brackets and doubts, not one ends in *-as*, all in *-es*, including the case Bricault cites to support his argument: *CIL* VI 571 = *RICIS* 501/0125) and it assumes a complete divorce between the reverse and the face. Simon 1979, 414 thought, implausibly enough, that the effect of placing Mithras in this position was to give him particular emphasis. There can surely be no question that in fact the trio Zeus-Helios-Serapis is primary, with Mithras being added as an afterthought.

[64] A.D. Nock 1925, 88 n. 35; 1937, 113, in keeping with his odd belief that there was a close connection between the Phrygian cults and those of Mithras, thought that this structure was proof that the taurobolium was also practised in the cult of Mithras. D.M. Cosi, Il mitreo nelle Terme di Caracalla: Riflessioni sulla presunta *fossa sanguinis* del mitreo delle Terme di Caracalla, in Bianchi 1979, 933–42 (with excellent photos, pls. XXVI–XXX) showed how implausible this was, and suggested that the hole served as a place from which ritual 'events' could be presented. After re-examining the site, M. Piranomonte has recently revived the idea that the pit was for the taurobolium (ap. *LTUR* 3 [1996] 267f. s.v. Mithra: Thermae Antoninianae, and further lit.), but her argument is completely circular: as we shall see, since McLynn's fundamental article (McLynn 1996) it is untenable to claim that the taurobolium involved the ritual described, or rather invented, by Prudentius (see Chap. 4.3c), so that some other explanation must be preferred. Very little was found in the mithraeum, and we have no idea when it may have been turned into one. Alternatively, the subterranean chamber may have been used as a temporary storage for the rubbish from meals; the narrow corridor that led down to it started between two latrines.

[65] Cf. Simon 1979, 413f.; Gordon 2006: 189–93. The first version of the text is usually dated to the reign of Caracalla 'or a little earlier', but in my view there is no good reason for assigning such a date. Henotheistic tendencies in Mithraism have been studied by M. Clauss, Omnipotens Mithras, *Epigraphica* 50 (1988) 151–61.

in mithraea (though all the cases reported so far are in different ways problematic).[66]

As I pointed out earlier, the process of integration was gradual. Initially, in the Late Republic, the new religious practices, at any rate the cult of Isis, were rejected by Romans of the élite. Although this hostility was provoked by essentially political anxieties about the instrumentalisation of such new cults by enemies of the ruling order, the successive expulsions on the orders of the Senate suggest that they were felt to be deeply alien. As the plebs was tamed, however, and emperor-worship began to be seen as an effective means of re-ordering the religious system as a whole, such criticism lost its force. It is generally supposed that Claudius reformed the Phrygian cult (though I am sceptical), and both Caius and the Flavians moved to assimilate the Egyptian cults.[67] We may assume that throughout this period the cults themselves made an effort, conscious or not, to rid themselves of their alien or marginal features and emphasise their integrative ones. This amounted to an unconscious adaptive strategy, furthered by the fact that they suffered neither internal theological disputes nor secessions due to purist zeal. Their ethical rules, and their acceptance of social difference, threatened no one. Eventually they proved useful in offering resistance to Christianity, and the official objections ceased entirely.

There was however a counter-view, that not only failed to discern any moral superiority on the part of the adherents of these cults, but saw them as the fount of corruption of basic Roman institutions, such as the family. The tradition of satire dealt precisely in such violently-drawn contrasts between an idealised 'us' and a corrupted 'them', with women often in the middle, serving as a fifth column. A good example is Juvenal's sixth satire, a misogynistic diatribe against marriage, where women are represented as capable of any subterfuge and folly in order

[66] Compare M. d'Asdia, Mosaici nilotici dal Celio, *Bollettino d'Arte* 109–10 (1999) 77–86 at 82 n. 28. Although there are no other inscriptions that mention both Serapis and Mithras (V. 792 is irrelevant, since it was part of a cache of concealed statues at Emerita, by no means all of them Mithraic), busts of Serapis have been found in two mithraea, S. Prisca in Rome (V. 479) and the Walbrook in London (V. 818). In both cases caution is called for, since the bust at S. Prisca might belong to the enormous quantities of infill, and the group at the Walbrook has other peculiarities (cf. R.L. Gordon, *JRA* 13 [2000] 736–42). The case(s) at Emerita (V. 783, 787) are also very doubtful, for the reasons given above, likewise the head of Isis found in the mithraeum of the Castra peregrinorum on the Caelian (Lissi Caronna 1986, 39).

[67] Cf. Fishwick 1966; Vermaseren 1977, 122f.; Takács 1995.

to make their husbands' lives hell.[68] Among these is joining one of those dreadful new cults that attract people of low intelligence, and are good only to ruin a family's fortune The wife in this scenario is simply a credulous dupe:

> Look! In comes the troupe of frenzied Bellona and the Mother of the Gods, along with an enormous eunuch, a face his perverted sidekick must revere. A long time ago now he picked up a shard and cut off his soft genitals. The noisy band and the common drums fall quiet in his presence and his cheeks are clothed in the Phrygian cap. In a booming voice he tells the woman to beware the arrival of September and the southerly winds, unless she purifies herself with a hundred eggs and presents him with her old russet-coloured dresses, to ensure that any serious or unforeseen disaster that's impending disappears into the clothes and atones for the whole year in one go. In the winter-time she'll break the ice, step down into the river and submerge herself three times in the morning Tiber, even cleansing her head in those swirling waters. Then, naked and shivering, she'll crawl right across the Proud King's Field on bleeding knees. If white Io tells her to, she'll go to the ends of Egypt and bring back water fetched from sweltering Meroë to sprinkle in Isis' temple, towering next to the ancient sheepfold [the Saepta in the Campus Martius]. You see, she think her instructions come from the voice of her Lady herself! There you have the kind of mind and soul that the gods converse with at night! Consequently the highest, most exceptional honour is awarded to Anubis, who runs along mocking the wailing populace, surrounded by his creatures in linen garments and with shaved heads. He's the one that asks for a pardon whenever your wife does not refrain from sex on the days which should be kept sacred and a large fine is due for violation of the guilt. When the silver snake has been seen to move its head, it's his tears and his practised mumblings which will ensure that Osiris will not refuses to pardon her fault—provided, of course, he's bribed by a fat goose and a slice of sacrificial cake.
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> Juvenal, *Sat.* 6, 512–41, tr. S. Braund

2. Ethics in the Phrygian Cults

> Il n'est aucune religion orientale dont nous puissions suivre à Rome l'évolution progressive aussi exactement que celle du culte de Cybèle

[68] "The warning against marriage should…not be read as a recommendation not to get married because of the dangers for the individual of becoming a hen-pecked or cuckolded husband, but as a general statement of the decay of society: it is useless to try and live according to old rules and traditions since their content has changed for the worse, and they no longer constitute the bulwark of society": G. Vidén, *Women in Roman Literature: Attitudes of Authors under the Early Empire* (Västervik 1993) 160.

> et Attis, aucune où apparaisse aussi nettement l'une des causes qui ont amené leur décadence commune et leur disparition. Toutes remontent jusqu'à une époque lointaine de barbarie, et elles ont hérité de ce passé sauvage une foule de mythes dont l'odieux pouvait être dissimulé, mais non supprimé, par un symbolisme philosophique, de pratiques dont toutes les interprétations mystiques déguisaient mal la grossièreté fondamentale, survivance d'une rude naturalisme. Nulle part la discordance entre les tendances moralisantes des théologiens et l'impudicité cruelle de la tradition n'est aussi éclatante. Un dieu dont on prétend faire le maître auguste de l'univers était le héros pitoyable et abject d'une obscène aventure d'amour; le taurobole, qui cherche à satisfaire les aspirations les plus élevées de l'homme vers la purification spirituelle et l'immortalité, apparaît comme une douche du sang qui fait songer à quelque orgie des cannibales. Les lettrés et les sénateurs qui participaient à ces mystères y voyaient officier des eunuques maquillés, à qui on reprochait des moeurs infâmes et qui se livraient à des danses étourdissantes rappelant les exercises des derviches tourneurs et des Aïssouas. On comprend la répulsion qu'inspirèrent ces cérémonies à tous ceux dont le jugement n'était pas oblitéré par une dévotion fanatique. Il n'est aucune superstition de l'idolâtrie dont les polémiste chrétiens parlent avec un mépris plus outrageux, et sans doute avec raison. Mais ils n'étaient plus contraints, eux, de verser leur vin nouveau dans de vieilles outres, et toutes les ignominies qui purent entacher cette antique religion phrygienne ne doivent pas nous rendre injustes envers elle et nous faire méconnaître les longs efforts tentés pour l'épurer peu à peu, pour lui donner une forme qui lui permît de répondre aux exigences nouvelles de la morale, de suivre la marche pénible de la société romaine vers le progrès religieux.

This is how, in the final paragraph of his chapter on the Phrygian cults in *Les religions orientales*, Franz Cumont perceived the system of values purveyed by the cult (Cumont 1929, 67f.). He was in his day by no means alone; such views were in fact commonplace at the time. The technique was to smother the mythical or historical past in a custard of ethical values dominant in their own social circle. Stressing Phrygian barbarism and its assault upon civilised, that is to say Hellenised, Rome was tacitly to invoke the behavioural norms of a particular social group and its interpretation of social reality (Cumont was the scion of a wealthy family of Belgian industrialists, a *rentier* with a private income that enabled him to write—lucky man—without being employed by an institution). They thus confirmed their own values by more or less unconsciously manipulating a past where they discerned a reflection of themselves. Convinced of the objectivity of their version of this past, they elevated their tautologies to the status of scientific conclusions, which then formed the basis of an idealist anthropology. At the same

time, field-work was supposed to provide systematic confirmation of the universal validity of these theories by overcoming their temporal and spatial limitations. Religion and thought could thus be abstracted from actual cultural systems and their 'true nature' discerned. The masters of such analytic truths were thus empowered to pass judgement on the ideas and praxis of the various 'others', without an inkling of the subjective nature of what they were doing.

Denouncing the moral turpitude of the oriental cults, especially Mater Magna, can thus been seen as a strategy for ignoring counter-evidence concerning their actual values. Such evidence could be found in the ancient texts and was in fact well-known to the cult's modern detractors (cf. Sfameni Gasparro 1981, 404). Thus the emperor Julian writes, in a manner even they could hardly find inacceptable:

> ἡμῖν οὖν ὁ θεσμὸς παρακελεύεται, τοῖς φύσει μὲν οὐρανίοις, εἰς γῆν δὲ ἐνεχθεῖσιν, ἀρετὴν μετὰ εὐσεβείας ἀπὸ τῆς ἐν τῇ γῇ πολιτείας ἀμησαμένους παρὰ τὴν προγονικὴν καὶ ζωογόνον σπεύδειν θεόν.[69]
>
> *Or.* 5, 169b

A few lines earlier, he also observes that the ceremony of the felling of the pine at the beginning of the festival *arbor intrat*, which we shall look at in more detail in the section on Metroac ritual (Chap. 4.3d), symbolises the harvesting of the most beautiful thing we have to offer the deity, namely virtue and piety (ἀρετὴν μετὰ εὐσεβείας). They are to be offered to the goddess, σύμβολον τῆς ἐνταῦθα χρηστῆς πολιτείας ἐσόμενον, as a symbol of our well-ordered polity here on earth (*Or.* 5, 169a). Nor is the evidence for such positive values confined to the late-antique period. There are also traces of them at a period when the Phrygian cults do not even seem to have had a mystery component. Lucretius provides a long description of the cult in his day, which can be analysed in a variety of different ways (2.600–60). What interests me here is the stress laid on filial duty and love (604f., 614–17, 643).[70]

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[69] "Accordingly the ritual enjoins us, who by nature belong to the heavens but have fallen to earth, to reap the harvest of our constitution here on earth, namely, virtue and piety, and then strive upwards to the goddess of our fore-fathers, to her who is the principle of all life" (tr. W.C. Wright).

[70] See the clear discussion by R.W. Sharples, Cybele and Loyalty to Parents, *Liverpool Classical Monthly* 10.9 (November 1985) 133f. He also mentions two problematic passages, Aristotle, *De mirab. ausc.* 162, 648b3 and [Plutarch], *De fluv.* 9.5. The latter describes how pious sons with their fathers would collect betyls on Mt Sipylos and place them in the temple of the Mother of the Gods, so as to maintain faith with their ancestors.

The passage also stresses the fear instilled in the vulgar crowd by the sight of the goddess in procession (622f.),[71] and points to the role of self-discipline, piety and loyalty to one's country as moral virtues characteristic of the cult.[72] To stress exclusively the shocking aspects of the cult is thus extremely one-sided.

I think the most promising method in this case is to take another look at the myth from this point of view, reading it as a means of communicating in symbolic terms a specific notion of transgression. Julian himself seems to do this at *Or.* 5, 169cd, where he interprets the myth of Attis as an allegory of the creation of the world, and the rituals as an invitation to piety, so that the souls of the worshippers may be restored to their celestial home, whence they came, and where they are to be re-united with the One.

One issue has to do with the sexual régime of the family, another with the difference between the divine world and the human, a third with dropping out. These at any rate can be seen as three types of transgression that are criticised and sanctioned in the myth in the name of preserving the established social order.[73]

First, the family. The function of the ban on mother-son incest is to protect the structure of the patriarchal family, based as it is on the notion of exclusive ownership of the female.[74] For a man to undermine

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The appearance of the same theme in Lucretius seems to indicate that there may be a grain of truth in this, despite the well-known problems posed by *De fluv*. For Mt. Sipylos near Smyrna as a centre of the worship of Cybele, cf. Strabo, *Geogr*. 10.3.12, 469C; Pausanias 3.22.4, 5.13.7; *CCCA* 1 nos. 544–47, 550, 555, 564, 571, 583; F. Bürchner, s.v. Sipylos 1, *RE* 3A (1927) 275–81; Roller 1999, 200–02.

[71] *Ingratos animos atque impia pectora volgi conterrere metu quae possint numine divae*, "that they may amaze the ungrateful minds and impious hearts of the vulgar with fear through the goddess' majesty" (tr. M. Ferguson Smith).

[72] Cf. Summers 1996, 341. I do not however understand why he assumes that it must have been the Roman nobility who "promoted the moral lessons being drawn from it [i.e. the cult of Cybele]", whatever quite we are to understand by that.

[73] Cf. Cosi 1986. Three of the contributions to AA.VV. 1981a are particularly relevant here: J. Scheid, Le délit religieux dans la Rome tardo-républicaine, pp. 117–71; D. Sabbatucci, Il peccato 'cosmico', pp. 173–77; T. Cornell, Some Observations on the *crimen incesti*, pp. 27–37. On the latter, see also M. Beard, Re-reading (Vestal) Virginity, in R. Hawley and B. Levick (eds.), *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments* (London 1995) 166–77.

[74] It is of course not my intention to impose a universal category (since, as Lévi-Strauss showed in *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* [Paris 1949], in view of its universality in relation to the theme of exchange, incest may well precede the patriarchal family; cf. R. Fox, *The Red Lamp of Incest* [London 1980]), simply one that is of use in discussing the societies in which the myth of Attis was picked up. There may be demographic and genetic reasons for avoiding incest (e.g. R. Fox, *Kinship and Marriage:*

the accepted structure of relations within the family in such a manner is to deserve to lose his genitals, the equivalent of being condemned to death (as at Rome: Cicero, *Leg.* 2.23).[75] However there is also another sort of danger, represented concretely by Agdistis bursting in upon the marriage-feast. I take this to refer to adultery, the groom being hardly in a position to refuse the offer. The divine nature of the seductress means she cannot be punished, even though the death of the desired object causes her intense grief and regret. It is however also thinkable that Agdistis' earlier loss of her hermaphroditism was in fact itself a violent punishment, which then triggered off the ensuing tragedy. However that may be, the message is clear: the brazen attempt at seduction produces a train of disaster for the bridal pair, who cannot even consummate their marriage.[76]

Second, the difference between the divine world and the human. Attis as herdsman succumbs to the advances of a goddess. Here the point is not so much their blood-relationship (mother-son) as the transgression of the divine-human boundary: Attis' conceit in breaking this rule and elevating himself to divine status is punished. At this level, the hidden agenda is to reinforce the fixed quality of the order established in society and thus maintain the status quo. In the myth however the sanctions are imposed asymmetrically: only the one who attempts to rise in status is punished. In other words, the mighty, like the gods, their reflection, can transgress social norms with impunity: the myth has them freely entering into sexual relations that transgress both the status-boundary and the marriage-bond. On the other and, I do not think the myth is at all interested in masturbation, as Loisy believed (1930, 97)—he was after all old enough to have been influenced by the late nineteenth-century

An Anthropological Perspective [Harmondsworth 1967]; N.B.M. Mead, s.v. Incest, in *IESS* 7 [1968] 115–22), but they are largely irrelevant here.

[75] A myth current among the Tatuyo of Columbia is helpful in conceptualising the problem here: P. Bidou, On Incest and Death: A Myth of the Tatuyo Indians of Northwest Amazonia, in M. Izard and P. Smith (eds.), *Between Belief and Transgression: Structuralist Essays in Religion, History and Myth* (Chicago 1982/Paris 1979) 129–51.

[76] Cf. G. Hoffmann, *Le châtiment des amants dans la Grèce classique* (Paris 1990) 52–77. My point about the ambiguity of Agdistis seems in tune with his remarks on p. 68: "Loin de s'affirmer comme un séducteur doué d'une virilité au-dessus de tout soupçon et de vouloir à tout prix s'opposer au femmes qui leur sont attribuées, l'adultère grec, de Paris à Alcibiade, joue d'une certaine ambigüité. Archer des lisières, adulte immature, il est aussi un être équivoque, comme s'il visait à réunir en sa personne les attraits des deux sexes et à exaspérer chez ses admirateurs le désir toujours insatisfait de la fusion en un de deux corps incomplets".

European anxieties about male masturbation—given the fact that the emission of sperm occurs while Zeus is dreaming.

The third theme is dropping out, which is seen as a punishable betrayal. I understand this in a religious sense. The human-being, chosen by the god, enjoys a hierogamy, or at any rate agrees to enter her service, despite the fact that this restricts his freedom of action and of movement. He enters a sort of metaphysical *temenos* that diminishes his right to social intercourse (cf. Julian, *Or.* 5, 167a). He can no longer return with impunity to the social world from which he has emancipated himself, as though his privileged status allowed him to ignore the divine will. In this context, it is interesting to note how, in Catullus' poem (63), Attis tries to escape the goddess' control despite having already cut off his own testicles (cf. Nauta 2004). He regrets what he has done: *iam iam dolet quod egi, iam iamque paenitet* (73). He wants to return to a past he is now cut off from, but Cybele prevents him from doing so by setting one of her mighty lions on him, which makes sure he cannot quit the sacred grove:

> *fac uti furoris ictu reditum in nemora ferat,*
> *mea libere nimis qui fugere imperia cupit* (79f.).[77]

Catullus' scenario highlights the transgressive character of Attis' longing to escape his service.[78] This longing to return to the familiar world is

[77] G.N. Sandy, The Imagery of Catullus 63, *TAPhA* 99 (1968) 389–99; P. Fedeli, Attis e il leone: dall'epigramma ellenistico al c.63 di Catullo, in *Letterature comparate. Problemi e metodo. Studi in onore di E. Paratore* (Bologna 1981) 1: 247–56; Takács 1996, 381f. J. Godwin, *Catullus. Poems 61–68* (Warminster 1995) 121f., denies both that the poem has any moral intention and that it has any implications for marriage. The real difficulty is that there is no 'logic' to the myth of the kind that such commentators imagine: they are hunting for an aetiology, an answer to a question they cannot even formulate, namely: why do the priests of the Phrygian cults castrate themselves?

[78] During the period when rites of passage were all the rage, several scholars suggested that the point in Catullus 63 is rather that Attis refuses to, or cannot, pass from youth to adulthood. O. Thomsen, *Ritual and Desire. Catullus 61 and 62 and Other Ancient Documents on Wedding and Marriage* (Aarhus 1992) 98 argued that Attis is escaping from sexual maturity, i.e. refusing to become a *paterfamilias*; he discerns a 'pederastic melancholy' within adult sexuality. This is directly contradicted by Attis' regret for the civic life, the social status, and the property (*bona*) he has had to abandon (59–67), cf. Takács 1996, 381. It has also been suggested that Attis is unable to transcend his youthful status in order to achieve the heterosexuality appropriate to adulthood: J. Strauss Clay 1995. Again one can object that Attis specifically regrets the children he can never have (69: *ego vir sterilis ero*?). An interesting interpretation of Attis as a liminal figure thereby capable of integrating opposites is to be found in B.M. Näasström, *The Abhorrence of Love. Studies in Rituals and Mystic Aspects in Catullus' Poem of Attis* (Uppsala 1989).

represented as occurring immediately after the self-castration. Catullus thus imaginatively enters into the mind of the extreme adherent, suggests the conflicts experienced by those induced to perform this act upon themselves: once they have done it, they must feel regret and, their eyes bathed in tears, long vainly to put the clock back, just as their god was prevented from returning to his own home, to his place of origin:

> *liquidaque mente vidit sine quis ubique foret,*
> *animo aestuante rursum reditum ad vada tetulit.*
> *ibi maria vasta visens lacrimantibus oculis,*
> *patriam allocuta maestast ita voce miseriter* (46–49).[79]

In the myth, as opposed to Catullus' poem, the motif of escape is expressed through the idea of wanting to marry a mortal woman: such an act would return Attis to normal life. This desire too is represented as a wrong-doing that has to be punished. Thus Ovid makes Attis exclaim that only the shedding of blood can atone for his guilt:

> *Merui! Meritas do sanguine poenas.*
> *Ah, pereant partes quae nocuere mihi!*
>
> *Fasti* 4.239f.

I think this message was understood by the more dedicated worshippers, those whose commitment was sufficient to make them long for their own moral regeneration, the inner counterpart of the physical alteration they had imposed on their body (the bans on self-castration by Roman citizens imply of course that people of this status did perform this act on themselves sufficiently often to attract imperial disapproval. The ban seems anyway not to have applied to peregrines).

It thus seems reasonable to read the myth (and even Catullus' poem) as an ideal account of priestly self-dedication to the divine world and of the punishment that attends the violation of that ideal. The elect individual is removed from the realm of ordinary relationships within the community so that he may take advantage of the divine offer of life. By marrying (or longing for his old life), Attis is seeking to escape from his dependence on the goddess, and she inflicts a fearful punishment upon everyone concerned.[80] Expressed in different terms, he is casting doubt on the primacy of the divine order, casting off religion for the

[79] The gender of Attis, and the *gallae/galli*, is deliberately unstable throughout the poem, cf. Takács 1996, 377f.; Nauta 2004, 601–05.

[80] In Ovid's version there was no prior sexual relation between Cybele and Attis: *turrigeram casto vinxit amore deam* (224). The fault lies plainly with Attis: *fallit et in nympha*

world. This is tantamount to rejecting the ideological superstructure whose ultimate function is to paper over the tensions arising from the contradictions of the system.

But there can be no virus-free areas here: the conflict clearly threatens the established order of things. The exemplary punishment, the violence and coercion inflicted by the dominant group (gods or humans) in order to maintain their privileges, is not incompatible with a touch of pity: the wretched sinner, having returned to the fold of order, is allowed eternally to magnify the greatness of his masters in that his hair never stops growing and his little finger can wiggle (as the sources say), or by unfeignedly loving the goddess who has removed from him the pleasures of sex. Everyone compensates for his misery as best he can.

To summarise, then, I argue that, alongside interpretations that focus on the system of beliefs (imposing order on chaos) or on ritual (as a model for praxis), the myth may be analysed as a means of getting access to certain values. We may take these as characteristic of the ethical systems current in the historical formations that took over the story of Attis, the story of death from divine love. One of these values is that adult sexual renunciation is morally superior to conjugal life.[81] The negation of male sexuality is thus parallel to, even a figure for, the rejection of geographical rootedness, of work, of the acquisition of wealth, and of membership in a specific social group capable of reproducing itself. The rejection of ordinary production and reproduction creates a new sort of hierarchy, whose basis is not status as the world sees it, and certainly not the trappings of status as ideally represented in the corporeal language of antiquity, but the extent of one's capacity and preparedness to imitate the god, and, by so doing, replicate his devotion to the Great Goddess beyond him. Ideologically, then, self-castration is absolutely central to the Phrygian cults, a centrality that surely explains the importance from the second century of the institution of the *tauro-/criobolium*. But the act of castration itself, like the self-laceration, is exemplary; the self-sacrifice of the few guarantees the authenticity of the commitment of the many.[82]

Sagaritide desinit esse quod fuit (229f.). Here, Cybele's concern is with the contamination represented by sexual contact with women.

[81] Cf. Attis' call to the *gallae*: *agite ite . . . (qui) corpus evirastis Veneris nimio odio, hilarate erae citatis erroribus animum* (i.e. of Cybele): Catullus 63.12–18.

[82] Three of the new *defixiones* from the temple-area of the Magna Mater in Mainz use imagery from the cult; each refers to the act of self-castration (*praecidere; abscidere*),

I have also tried to bring out the hope that people in daily life might come to recognise the greatness of the Phrygian goddess. For there is no dearth of passages in which she is damned as immoral, a charge that is in fact, as we shall see, far more applicable to Isis. Predictably enough, it is Juvenal, his pen hard and sharp as ever, who takes it upon himself to offer such an inverse image of the Mother:

> *Hic nullus verbis pudor aut reverentia mensae,*
> *Hic †turpis† Cybeles et fracta voce loquenti*
> *libertas et crine senex fanaticus albo*
> *sacrorum antistes, rarum ac memorabili magni*
> *gutturis exemplum conducendusque magister.*
> *Quid tamen expectant, Phrygio quos tempus erat iam*
> *more supervacuam cultris abrumpere carnem?*[83]
>
> *Sat.* 2, 110–16

Isis was thus by no means the sole target of the lubricious imagination of writers hostile to the introduction of foreign cults. In this case, the goddess' followers are made out to be interested solely in having a good time in the flesh-pots: their bad manners and vulgar language betray their obscure social origins (cf. Pachis 1996).[84] This reputation for gluttony may be due to a custom that, looked at in another light, might equally be thought of as praiseworthy. During the spring festival of Cybele (April 4th–10th), feasts were arranged, to which guests were formally invited. This custom started out as an aristocratic, indeed patrician, habit, for which the name was *mutitationes*: at this season they would invite one another to their houses in turn, in commemoration of the arrival of the goddess in Rome (Ovid, *Fasti* 4.353–56; Aulus Gellius, *NA* 2.24.2). This was of course a means of strengthening

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but are at least as interested in the frenzied self-laceration of the *galli* and the blood that flowed from such behaviour; cf. Blänsdorf 2008, nos. 16–18.

[83] "Here there is no sense of shame in their language, no table manners, here is Cybele's foul *** and the freedom to speak in an effeminate voice. A crazed white-haired old man is the priest of the rites, a rare and memorable specimen of that enormous throat, an expert worth the fee. What are they waiting for? It's already time for them to use their knives to hack away their superfluous flesh in the Phrygian manner" (tr. S.M. Braund). As for the crux, *†turpis† Cybeles* is the reading of P,V and the contaminated group Φ, except for two of the latter, which read *turpes* (cf. J. Willis ad loc. in the Teubner ed.). The old Loeb of G.G. Ramsey translated hopefully: "You will hear all the foul talk and squeaking tones of Cybele", which is obviously impossible.

[84] There are many parallel passages, e.g. Juvenal's description of a wild dinner-party, where the guests hurl drinking-cups at one another and the attendants because they get so drunk, as Corybantic, i.e. like those of the *galli* (5.24–29). Jerome denounces the greed of Isiac and Metroac priests (*Epist.* 107.10).

bonds within the group and reinforcing their sense of sharing the same values. But seen from the outside, or critically, such exclusive feasts, annually repeated, might appear simply to be a means of openly reinforcing the gulf between those of a standing to take part in them and those who were not. Of course the élite was granted its exclusive privileges; it was when the custom moved downwards socially, among the priests and ordinary adherents of an exotic cult, that resentment was caused.[85] The ideological hostility such occasions aroused is thus hardly surprising.[86]

Gluttony however is only one of Juvenal's accusations. There was also castration, always sure to arouse horror and disgust in the implied reader, as Juvenal suggests by his choice of the phrase *supervacuam . . . carnem*: (115). Castration of course implies feminisation (*fracta voce*); and feminisation is equated with the pathic.[87] All are metaphors for the corruption inherent in the new. The intention is to tar Cybele herself with this brush, to make her, because she condones self-castration, responsible for all manner of aberrant sexual practices. The theme was greedily taken up by Christian invective, where the adherents of the Phrygian cults are a by-word for lasciviousness. One simply needs to cite a line from the *Carmen contra paganos* to see the sort of claim that was repeatedly made: *Quem lasciva cohors, monstrum, comitaret ovantem* (l. 66).[88] However, the indifference of Christian invective to truth or even plausibility is too familiar to require comment. The self-conscious hyperbole demanded of a Roman satirist has here been etiolated into a wearisome repetition of the claim to occupy the moral high ground.

In fact, however, within the context of the Metroac concept of the divine world, Cybele defends chastity *à outrance*. What happens to Attis happens because he unilaterally breaks the requirement of sexual fidelity,

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[85] Banquets on a considerable scale are known to have been held in the *triclinium* of the Serapeum at Ostia. The relative luxury of the priestly life must have been an important motive for the decision to join such groups, the human urge to fulfil spiritual needs being matched by the need to fulfil more immediately pressing ones.

[86] We might also mention here the accusation that the participants in the Phrygian cults make a fearful noise and fall into ecstasy (e.g. Rhianos ap. *AnthPal* 6.173; Diod. Sic. 3.57.8; Ovid, *Fasti* 4.243f. etc., with Pachis 1996, 210–18). For some images of the instruments used in Metroac processions, see e.g. the r. and l. lateral faces of *CIL* VI 506/30782 = *ILS* 4414 = *CCCA* 3, no. 358 with pls. CCX and CCXII (c. 295 AD); cf. *CIL* XIV 385 = *ILS* 4162 = *CCCA* 3, 395; *CCCA* 3, no. 378 (both Ostia, II^{p}).

[87] See Chap. 4.3.b below.

[88] See also Minucius Felix, *Octav.* 22.3–5; Arnobius, *Adv. nat.* 1.35; 41–44; 2.5; 5.13 and 16 etc.; Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 2.4.5; 2.6.7; 7.24–26; Prudentius, *Peristeph.* 10.1059ff.

or restriction, laid upon him by the goddess. It is his breaking of the agreement that leads to the hasty self-castration (Ovid, *Fasti* 4.221–46). And the goddess' followers do likewise in order to avoid the danger of a similar temptation.

We may now move on from the level of myth to the Claudian pseudo-history of the goddess' arrival in Rome. Here the theme of the goddess' concern with, and defence of, chastity re-appears in a good structuralist transformation. In this account, Claudia Quinta is the woman who invokes Cybele's aid when the ship carrying the sacred stone up to Rome gets stuck on a sand-bank in the Tiber.[89] Her chastity had been impugned just at the moment when all Rome was agog to greet the goddess from Pessinus. Whereupon the Great Mother duly intervenes in aid of the most chaste of Roman matrons.[90] Chastity was thus the first lesson Cybele taught the Romans.[91] Nothing could be further from the later accusations of lasciviousness.

On the same theme, we may note the admiration evinced for those who were capable of remaining chaste even though they had not physically gelded themselves. This is the implicit theme of Diodorus' account. In the context of the goddess' inventions in the realm of music, he praises Marsyas, who imitated her in inventing the double 'flute'; as an example of his intelligent self-discipline (*sophrosyne*), the historian mentions that the proof of his moderation was his renunciation of sex: τῆς δὲ σωφροσύνης σημεῖον εἶναί φασι τὸ μέχρι τῆς τελευτῆς ἀπείρατον γενέσθαι τῶν ἀφροδισίων (3.58.3).

Moreover there are some examples of conduct by followers of Cybele irreproachable even in the eyes of the *bienpensants* whose views I quoted

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[89] Ovid, *Fasti* 4.300–28; cf. Livy 29.10.4–11.8; 14.5–14; 36.36.3f.; Julian, *Or.* 5,160b. The bibliography on this 'event' is enormous; it will be enough to cite the contrasting views of Schmidt 1909, 1–18; Bömer 1964; Gruen 1990, 6 n. 3 ("Some troubling discrepancies exist between these texts, but do not require discussion here"); Borgeaud 2004, 59–62, 69–71; Berneder 2004. See further, Chap. 4.3.a below.

[90] On the ethical implications of the Claudia Quinta episode, cf. Cosi 1986, 26: "[Gli fonti] non soltanto dimostrano l'esigenza nel culto di una generica purità rituale, ma testimoniano un insisto e significativo interesse da parte della dea per la castità". C.E. Schultz, *Women's Religious Activity in the Roman Republic* (Chapel Hill 2006) 145 emphasises those versions that suggest that it was their unblemished reputations that led to the selection of both Claudia Quinta and P. Scipio Nasica to be on the welcoming committee.

[91] The second lesson must have been the importance of keeping agreements, shown by the triumph over Hannibal that occurred shortly after the goddess had been accepted into the pomerium (cf. Alvar 1994). This salvation *in extremis* could be interpreted as eloquent testimony to her saving power.

at the beginning of this section. If, instead of allowing themselves to be seduced by the tradition of moral invective, they had paid a little more attention to the epigraphic evidence, they would have found, among the mass of individual votives, a number of examples, mainly funerary, of conventional piety focused upon the family.[92] From the late second century, the performance of the *tauro-/criobolium*, though undertaken as a public sacrifice for the good of the whole Empire, was also considered to be a means of individual catharsis, while in the late third and fourth centuries it might be seen as a statement of one's social and moral superiority.[93] "In the minds of the devotees themselves, the public and private aspects of their religion were not clearly delimited" (Matthews 1973, 178). One such late example is the altar recording the *taurobolium* and *criobolium* repeated at Rome by Ga[ma?]lios after an interval of 32 years, no doubt sometime in the fourth century, which he describes as not merely a σύμβολον εὐτυχίης, a token of good fortune (l. 4), but as an offering consisting of his acts, his mind, his exceptional life, all the good things of his spirit: ἔργα, νόον, πρῆξιν, βίον ἔξοχον, ἐσθλὰ πρόπαντα Γα[μα]λίου πραπίδων (l. 1f.).[94]

The most eloquent example of all however is again funerary. This is the joint monument, now in the Capitoline Museum, of the eminent senator Vettius Agorius Praetextatus and his wife Aconia Fabia Paulina dated c. AD 384.[95] In the course of her long address to her deceased husband, which is unfortunately too long to cite *in extenso*, Fabia Paulina writes: *Te propter omnis me beatam me piam celebrant quod ipse me bonam disseminas totum per orbem: ignota noscor omnibus* (rev., ll. 30–32).[96] Although these texts are so late, there is in my view no reason to dismiss their implications for Metroac worship during the Principate.

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[92] E.g. *CIL* VI 2260 = *CCCA* 3, no. 291; 2260 = *ILS* 4168 = *CCCA* 3, no. 292; XIV 371 = *CCCA* 3, no. 423 = ASR 12.1 (Mythologische Sarkophage) 227 no. 76 (fine Alcestis sarcophagus from Ostia); XIV 408 = *ILS* 6179 = *CCCA* 3, no. 442; *CCCA* 3, no. 445 (both Portus); *CIL* XII 1567 = *ILS* 4140 = *CCCA* 5, no. 363 (Dea Augusta, Narb.); *CIL* III 2676/9707 = *CCCA* 6, no. 152; III 14243 = 158; 13903 = 167 (all Salona); *CIL* III 1100 = ILS 7141 = *CCCA* 6, no. 485 (Apulum); *IOSPE* 1, no. 192 = *CCCA* 6, no. 517 (Olbia). However, there seem to be very few clear cases in Africa, in the western provinces, and in the entire Rhine-Danube area.

[93] On the history of the taurobolium, to which I return in 4.3c below, see Rutter 1969 (better than Duthoy 1969); in the fourth century, McLynn 1996.

[94] *IGUR* 110f. no. 127 = *CCCA* 3, no. 239 (found beneath the Palazzo dei Convertendi in 1929).

[95] *CIL* VI 1779 = *ILS* 1259 = *CCCA* 3, no. 246, cf. Liebeschuetz 1999.

[96] "Because of you all salute me happy and religious, because you have broadcast my goodness to the world. I was unknown, (now) I am known to all."

Ordinary initiates, and not merely the élite of the *galli*, expected from their adherence to the cult a marked and continuing improvement in their ethical life.[97]

3. Isiac Ethics

ἐπόμνυμαι
[δὲ καὶ οὓς προσκυνῶ θ]εοὺς συντηρήσειν
[καὶ φυλάξειν τὰ παραδ]εδομένα μοι μυστή-
[ρια.…
Isiac oath from Oxyrhynchus: *PSocItal* 1162
= Totti no. 8b ll. 4–7[98]

My discussion of Cybele and Attis has suggested that the way forward is to examine the myth(s) for the implicit ethical values it contains. The situation in relation to the myth of Isis and Osiris is a little different, however, since there adulteries by husbands, suppressed by Plutarch, play an important symbolic role.[99] Indeed, the narrative as a whole, with its incest, murder and violence, is unedifying. It therefore seems best to use a wider range of information, especially in view of the fact that the sources are anyway more abundant.

Let me start with a passage of Plutarch, which claims that it is how one approaches the deity that matters, as part of a commitment to an end through a rule of life:

> The name of her sanctuary, the Iseum, clearly offers recognition and knowledge of what really exists; for it is so called to indicate that we shall

[97] Cf. the inscription on the tabula ansata at the threshold of the Basilica Hilariana, probably a *schola* of the *dendrophori* of the Caelian (beyond the well-known image of the evil eye surrounded by aggressive animals and pierced by a spear): *intrantibus hic deos propitios et basilic(ae) Hilarianae* (*CIL* VI 30973a = *ILS* 3992, with the results of the later excavations of the site: A. Carignani, *ArchLaz* 10 (1990) 72ff.; C. Pavolini, La topografia antica della sommità del Celio, *MDAI(R)* 100 (1993) 443–505). I take it that this divine care was felt to be earned.

[98] "I swear both to watch over the gods I worship and to keep secret the mysteries divulged to me." We possess two closely related versions of the Isiac oath, *PSI* 1162 (III^{P}) and 1290 (I^{P}), repr. as Totti nos. 8b and 8a respectively; both reveal the initiates' desire to fulfil the gods' commands, cf. R. Merkelbach, Der Eid der Isismysten, *ZPE* 1 (1967) 55–73.

[99] Cf. Griffiths 1970, 316f. In the real Egypt, as opposed to the myths, adultery was severely punished: C. Eyre, Crime and Adultery in Ancient Egypt, *JEA* 70 (1984) 92–105.

> know what really exists if we approach the sanctuaries of the goddess with reason and reverence (μετὰ λόγου καὶ ὁσίως).
>
> *De Iside* 2, 352a, tr. J.G. Griffiths (adapted)

Both here and elsewhere (e.g. *De Iside* 3, 352c), Plutarch is unfortunately not very explicit, and leaves the nature of what he would have considered unethical behaviour, which no doubt includes magic, rather unclear. Nevertheless a good deal of relevant information can be extracted both from his essay on Isis and Osiris and from Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.

The first point to emphasise is one I have already made, namely that sexual abstention is one of the commonest moral injunctions in the cult. It may well be that this was a temporary abstention intended only to apply to the preparatory period before an important ritual. To cite Plutarch again:

> The process of consecration in the meantime, by means of a continuous and temperate regimen and abstinence from many foods and the pleasures of love (σώφρονι μὲν ἐνδελεχῶς διαίτῃ καὶ βρωμάτων πολλῶν καὶ ἀφροδισίων ἀποχαῖς), keeps in check the unrestrained and pleasure-seeking element, and accustoms one to undertake austere and difficult services in sacred rites, of which the end is the knowledge of the First and the Lord…
>
> *De Iside* 2, 351f–352a, tr. J.G. Griffiths

Again, when Lucius is about to be initiated, he specifically alludes to the burdensomeness of the requirement of sexual abstention, *castimoniorum abstinentiam satis arduam* (*Met.* 11.19.3). But such abstention was apparently also a condition of participation in one of the grand festivals, something we hear about repeatedly in Augustan poetry. Thus Propertius complains:

> *Tristia iam redeunt iterum sollemnia nobis:*
> *Cynthia iam noctes est operata decem.*
> *Atque utinam perant, Nilo quae sacra tepente*
> *misit matronis Inachis Ausoniis!*[100]
>
> 2.33a.1f.

And again:

> *Tu quoniam's, mea lux, magno dismissa periclo,*
> *munera Dianae debita redde choros,*

[100] "Once again to my sorrow the dismal rites have returned: now for ten nights is Cynthia engaged in worship. Down with the rites which the daughter of Inachus has sent from the warm Nile to the matrons of Italy!" (tr. G.P. Goold).

redde etiam excubias divae nunc, ante iuvencae;
votivas noctes et mihi solve decem![101]

2.28.59–62

The primary aim of such abstention, which was also practised in civic cult and other non-oriental mystery-cults, was to mark the special status of the deity and the gulf between human and divine.[102] It seems however to have been taken especially seriously in the cult of Isis. In Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, the priest Mithras tells Lucius:

> *Eat nunc et summo furore saeviat et crudelitati suae materiem quaerat aliam; nam in eos quorum sibi vitas in servitium deae nostrae maiestas vindicavit non habet locum casus infestus*.[103]
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> Apuleius, *Met*. 11.15

However, there can be no doubt that sexual abstinence was understood both as a mark of piety and as a technique to attain moral purity over a life-time. A couple of lines later, Mithras stresses that the goddess has guided Lucius to the point of being able to worship her. By becoming her slave, obeying her precepts, he will enjoy true freedom: *teque iam nunc obsequio religionis nostrae dedica et ministerii iugum subi voluntarium*, "dedicate yourself today to obedience to our cult and take on the voluntary yoke of her service". This same idea occurs in another passage that I cited in the previous chapter (p. 29), though it bears repeating here:

> But if by assiduous obedience, worshipful service, and determined celibacy you win the favour of my godhead, you will know that I—and I alone—can even prolong your life beyond the limits determined by your fate (*ultra statuta fato tuo spatia vitam . . . prorogare*).
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> 11.6.7, tr. Hanson

The priest Maiistas in the foundation-narrative of Sarapieion A at Delos proclaims that Isis and Serapis, as saving divinities, bestow benefits

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[101] "My darling, since you have been released from mortal danger, perform the due service of a dance to Diana; perform also your vigil to her who, heifer once, is goddess now; and pay the ten nights pledged to me!" (tr. Goold).

[102] J. Bergman, *Decem illis diebus*. Zum Sinn der Enthaltsamkeit bei der Mysterienweihen im Isisbuch des Apuleius, in *Studia G. Widengren, 1* (Leyden 1972) 332–46, has argued that these 10-day periods are to be linked with regular initiation and functioned as a sign of fidelity to the divinity, but, quite apart from Bergman's forced interpretation of the ten-day period in relation to the Egyptian view that pregnancy lasted ten months, it seems odd to me that such a sign should precede the ritual death.

[103] "Let [Fortune] rage in all her fury and hunt some other object for her cruelty, for hostile chance has no opportunity against those whose lives the majesty of our goddess has emancipated into her own servitude" (tr. J.A. Hanson).

upon good people who have only pure thoughts in their hearts.[104] This is confirmed by one of the oracles given by Serapis to Timainetos, recorded in *cod. Vindob*. 130:

> ἁγνὰς χεῖρας ἔχων καὶ νοῦν καὶ γλῶτταν ἀληθῆ
> εἴσ<ι>θι, μὴ λοετροῖς, ἀλλὰ νόῳ καθαρός.[105]

Here the iteration of νοῦς is intended to make the contrast between the 'old' *ex opere operato* efficacy of standard purification and the new demand upon conscience quite unmistakable. The traditional indexicalisation of the whole person, hands and mind, has been decisively slewed towards the latter.

In this context there is a nice story told by Aelian about a cavalry-officer named Lenaeus who came to the temple of Serapis to have his valuable war-horse healed: it had been struck in the right eye and gone blind in it, and the large shield used by the cavalry blinkered the left eye, so he was useless (*NA* 11.31). Lenaeus' main argument was that a horse cannot commit sacrilege (θεοσυλία) or murder; nor can it use impious language (βλασφημία). Moreover, he himself had never wronged anyone (καὶ αὐτός ὡς οὐδεπώποτε οὐδένα οὐδὲν ἀδικήσας). Evidently impressed by these moral arguments, the god attended to the animal, prescribing vapour baths at mid-day in the *temenos* instead of a fomentation. And it duly recovered its sight in that eye.

The complement of such thinking was the interpretation of illness and misfortune as the result of divine anger. This is the specific application to the Egyptian deities of a very widespread belief in antiquity. Ovid briefly refers to such individuals seen in the streets of Rome:

> *vidi ego linigerae numen violasse fatentem*
> *Isidis isiacos ante sedere focos.*
> *alter, ob huic similem privatus lumine culpam,*
> *clamabat media se meruisse via.*[106]
>
> *Epist. ex Pont.* 1.1.51–54

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[104] *IG* XI.4 1299 = *RICIS* 202/0101 l.33f.: ἐσθλοῖσιν δὲ σαώτορες αἰὲν ἔπεσθε | ἀνδράσιν οἳ κατὰ πάντα νόωι ὅσια φρονέουσιν.

[105] "Enter with you hands and mind undefiled and your tongue truthful, pure not just by dint of lustrations but in your mind." Most conveniently to be found as Totti no. 61; the version in *cod.Laur*. 37 is slightly different. The date is uncertain, but probably IIP.

[106] "I have seen one who confessed to having outraged the godhead of linen-wearing Isis. He was sitting in front of her temple. And another who had been blinded for the same reason, crying out in the street that he deserved it." This and several other of these texts are cited by F. Solmsen, *Isis among the Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge MA 1979) 72. His comments however are surprisingly superficial, though I agree with his

What seems specific to the cult of Isis here, however, is the open confession of the cause of their misfortunes, presumably the result of a consultation of the priests. Such oracular pronouncements were thus the key institution linking misfortune and illness with the notion of specific personal wrong-doing, and thus led directly to rituals of public and private contrition, which were intended to purge adherents of their faults. Aristides states that Serapis grants a fitting destiny to all according to their deserts (*Or.* 45.25). It seems probable that the cult of Isis in the West was here picking up a theme of earlier Egyptian moral thinking, where Osiris was not the protector of all the dead but only of those who have attained a mode of life in accordance with Ma'at and managed to avoid the expansion of chaos in the world.[107]

Moral desert is one of the central themes of *Metamorphoses* Book 11. An important constituent of Lucius' sin was *curiositas*.[108] An additional reason for his being transformed was his enslavement to pleasure, *serviles voluptates* (11.15.1).[109] Lucius has to repent of all this if he wants

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general argument, that the cult of Isis become an integral part of the Graeco-Roman cultural superstructure.

[107] M. Zecchi, *A Study of the Egyptian God Osiris Hemag* (Imola 1996), on the story of Setne-Khamwas, dating from the end of the 2nd millennium (transl. by M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, 3* [Berkeley and Los Angeles 1979] 125–51), which gives the impression that the protection of the good is a moralising inference from the belief in the judgement of the heart. I owe this information to Dr. M.A. Molinero. See also S. Quirke, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (London 1992) 52ff.

[108] A. Labhardt, *Curiositas*: Notes sur l'histoire d'un mot et d'une notion, *Museum Helveticum* 17 (1960) 206–224; R. Joly, *Curiositas, L'Antiquité Classique* 30 (1961) 33–44. The links between curiosity, ill-fortune and magic have been explored by S. Lancel, 'Curiositas' et préoccupations spirituelles chez Apulée, *RHR* 160 (1961) 25–46, at 32ff.; J. Penwill, Slavish Pleasures and Profitless Curiosity: Fall and Redemption in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, *Ramus* 4 (1975) 49–82; Ch.-M. Ternes, De la métamorphose à l'initiation. L' itinéraire de Lucius dans les *Métamorphoses* d'Apulée", in Ries 1986, 363–376; P.G. Walsh, The Rights and Wrongs of Curiosity (Plutarch to Augustine), *Greece and Rome* 35 (1988) 73–85, urging a close relation between Augustine's *Confessions* and Apuleius' novel, though the new Augustine sermons provide surprisingly little support here, cf. F. Dolbeau, *Nouveaux sermons de saint Augustin pour la conversion des païens et donatistes* (IV), *Recherches Augustiniennes* 26 (1992) 69–141, cf. the transl. by E. Hill, *Augustine of Hippo: Newly Discovered Sermons* (New York 1997); also J. De Filippo, *Curiositas* and the Platonism of Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, *AJPh* 111 (1990) 471–492; P. Citati, La luce della notte, *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici* 25 (1990) 165–177 at 171. L.A. MacKay however adds a number of other sins, wealth, disobedience and the satisfaction of one's own desires as contributing to Lucius' punishment: The Sin of the Golden Ass, *Arion* 4 (1965) 474–80. Hijmans 1995, 362–79 provides a systematic analysis of the theme of *curiositas* in the novel.

[109] Horace, *Epist.* 1.2.55f.: *sperne voluptates: nocet empta dolore voluptas*, makes clear that such pleasure was considered addictive or enslaving. G.N. Sandy, *Serviles voluptates* in Apuleius' Metamorphoses, *Phoenix* 28 (1974) 234–244 links such pleasures to magic; cf. however Griffiths 1978, 155–58 on the higher *voluptas*; and Fick 1992, 273.

to obtain the goddess' grace again after his earlier life of dissolution. More or less subtle divine messages arrive, and at the end of his period of instruction, the initiand has learned his lesson. But he has to confess his faults and obtain the goddess' forgiveness before he is allowed to proceed to actual initiation.[110]

In connection with the negative connotations of sex in the novel, it may just be worth pointing out that there have been several attempts to read it in moralising terms, and that the sexual violence and disorder of the first ten books disappear in the eleventh.[111] It is not simply that sexual relations are there condemned, but that the initiate actually becomes the goddess' consort (11.24). This symbolic status necessarily affects male-female sexual relations in the every-day world, since the underlying message is the protection of the organic family not founded upon the use of physical violence. "[Isis] represents sexuality within the orbit of the civilised community and the family: she represents marriage, and cannot condone illicit lust" (Griffiths 1978, 158). Chastity here is an ideal that can never be fully attained, yet it is precisely its utopian status (in J.Z. Smith's terms) that allows it to act as a model for actual relationships in the world.

The initiates of Isis were perfectly aware of the difficulties arising from attempting to live by the moral rules held up for them by the cult. In the heady excitement of initiation, they were convinced they could, by the goddess' aid, overcome their weaknesses. Some succeeded, as votives or funerary inscriptions occasionally indicate. One woman is called *coniunx castissima*, for example, another *pientissima*, a third *coniunx*

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[110] There is a much later story about a senator who was briefly converted to Christianity praying: "O goddess, I have sinned: pardon me. I have slipped back": Cyprian ap. CSEL 3, 302ff. cited by Versnel 1990, 91 and n. 179. Despite the date, I find it interesting because it suggests something about the persistence of the notion of guilt in the cult of Isis. On confession in general, there is of course the vast compendium of R. Pettazzoni, *La confessione dei peccati*. 3 vols. (Bologna 1935), cf. the briefer summary, Confession of Sins and the Classics, *HThR* 30 (1937) 7ff. The sequence confession-judgement-forgiveness has been examined in detail by Griffiths 1982, which is more or less the same as idem 1991, 313ff., cf. also Versnel 1990, 66 and 203ff.

[111] "The course of the narrative thus expresses a rejection of a phallic cult in favor of that of the maternal goddess": C.C. Schlam, Sex and Sanctity: The Relationship of Male and Female in the *Metamorphoses*, in Hijmans and Van der Paardt 1978, 95–105 at 105; Winkler too stresses Lucius' moral development (e.g. 1985, 146). E. Finkelpearl, however, in line with today's dominant scepticism, urges: "Our conclusions about Lucius' moral development depend upon whom we believe: an ex-ass or a sophistic novelist": The Judgement of Lucius: Apuleius *Metam.* 10.29–34, *ClassAnt* 10 (1991) 221–36.

optima et sanctissima, bene de se merita.[112] Another man speaks of his wife, Flavia, who predeceased him, in the following terms: *Primitiva, gratissima coniunxs, Flavia, et ipsa cultrix deae Phariae casta sedulaque et forma decore repleta, cum qua ter denos dulcissimos egerim annos.*[113] Although of course such epithets also belong to the conventional language of praise of a woman, we may perhaps take them, given what I have said about the wider Isiac context, as evidence that the cult was valued, among both men and women, precisely because it provided a structure both inside and outside the home for the acquisition and public demonstration of such virtues.

Outside the home: that was precisely the problem for conventional morality, particularly in the caricatural form we find it in satire. One of the anxieties encouraged by the strict separation of male and female spheres is the fear of what women will get up to if left unsupervised at home (but even there, male slaves represented a danger) or are allowed out of the house by themselves, especially when there were strange men about. Such fears were very clearly at work in the imaginations of senators at the time of the Bacchanal affair in 186 BC. Insofar as the cult of Isis attracted women during the late Republic and well into the early Empire, so that they had occasion to 'meet' shaven-headed Egyptian priests in the temple, it is hardly surprising to find that such anxieties were again aroused. The cult was immediately suspected of encouraging vice. Ovid includes the temple of Isis in a list of places much used for assignations, while suggesting an elective affinity between goddess and illicit sex, via the familiar identification with Io: *nec fuge linigerae Memphitica templa iuvencae: multas illa facit, quod fuit ipsa Iovi* (*Ars amat*. 1.78).[114]

Moreover, a famous case under Tiberius seemed to give colour to such fears and accusations; it certainly produced a reaction very similar to the case of the Bacchanals: the statue of Isis was thrown into the Tiber, the temple razed to the ground, the ceremonies forbidden, and several priests were crucified. The occasion was the debauchery of a chaste

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[112] *ILS* 9442 = *RICIS* 512/0101 (which I take with Festugière to be Isiac; Ravenna); *CIL* VI 34776 = *RICIS* 501/0161; 2249 = 501/ 0162 (both Rome).

[113] "Flavia Primitiva, my dearest wife, who was herself a chaste and devoted worshipper of Isis, whose beauty was (ever) proper, and with whom I lived thirty extremely happy years": *CIL* VI 17985a = *RICIS* 501/0177 (sarcophagus from Rome, perhaps mid-III^{p}).

[114] Loosely: "Do not avoid the Egyptian shrine of Io clothed in linen; she makes sure that plenty of girls end up doing what she did with Jupiter."

married woman, Paulina, by Decius Mundus, a man of equestrian rank who had fallen in love with her and been several times sent off with a flea in his ear. He had even offered her a large sum of money to oblige his infatuation. According to the highly, perhaps suspiciously, circumstantial account provided by Josephus (*Ant. Jud.* 18.65–80), Paulina was very much devoted to the worship of Isis: θεραπείᾳ τῆς Ἴσιδος σφόδρα ὑπηγμένην (§70). Mundus' freedwoman Ida bribed several of the priests of Isis to find a means of satisfying Mundus' passion. One of them told Paulina that she had been chosen to share the bed of Anubis. In this belief she duly went to the temple, attended by the priests, and there had intercourse with Mundus alias Anubis. Her mouth enlarged by the belief that she had encountered the god, she made the most of the story in her social circle, until Mundus, unable to contain his triumph, told her the truth. The husband informed the emperor, who reacted in the manner I have already described.

It hardly matters whether, or how much of, this story is true.[115] All that matters is that many people believed it, and that it served as the official reason for persecuting the cult: although the Iseum claimed to be the temple of chastity, this was not in fact the case. It was this lesson that the moral majority learned. From that point of view, Juvenal's epithet *lena* for Isis was not an outrageous slur but a simple fact.[116]

These were not the only grounds for Roman ambivalence about the cult. The elegiac poets complain at being compelled to sexual abstinence while their lovers are away at the Iseum for days at a time. The cult thus

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[115] It has been plausibly suggested that this was a political persecution, though there is no direct evidence for it, cf. Dunand 1980, 71ff. Takács 1995 is surprisingly superficial here, since, though she agrees with Dunand, she does not seem to realise that conclusions drawn from a single type of evidence may distort reality. She thus argues that the numismatic evidence for the late Republic shows that the cult was not revolutionary as A. Alföldi, Isiskult und Umsturzbewegung im letzten Jhdt. der römischen Republik, *Schweizerischer Münzblätter* 5 (1954) 25–31 once claimed (whose arguments were dismissed already by Crawford, *RRC* p. 584 no. 2), without making the obvious point that evidence of this type could never prove anything relevant to such issues. If she had taken the literary evidence, essentially the elegists, into consideration, she would perhaps in this case have qualified her point—for which there is otherwise plenty to be said—that the Senate's repression of the cult was less ethical than political. In my view Malaise's discussion of the role of political considerations in the cult's expansion is the most successful (1972a, 357ff.). W.C. van Unnink, Flavius Josephus and the Mysteries, in Vermaseren 1979, 244–79 at 278, argues that we should concentrate less on the incident itself than on the general image of the mysteries purveyed by Josephus, a Jew convinced of the superiority of his own religion, in the Flavian period.

[116] The wife is imagined as dolling herself up for assignations with a lover *in hortis aut aput Isiacae potius sacraria lenae* (Sat. 6.488f.).

interfered with their own sexual pleasure, provided a sphere in which women could be temporarily independent of someone else's sexual will. At the same time, however, we can use this evidence to reinforce the general claim that the cult of Isis genuinely did place a high value on chastity and sexual abstinence. It never occurs to these poets, for example, to imagine that their muses were not spending their ten days of chastity honestly. If they had had any suspicions, we can be sure they would have expressed themselves differently.[117] Tibullus imagines Delia, dressed in pure linen, sitting awake at night in the temple:

> *nunc dea nunc succurre mihi…*
> *ut mea votivas persolvens Delia noctes*
> *ante sacras lini tecta fores sedeat…*[118]
>
> 1.3.27–30

Propertius too:

> *at tu, quae nostro, nimium pia, causa dolori's,*
> *noctibus his vacui, ter faciamus iter.*[119]
>
> 2.33a.21f.

All this, to my mind, gives colour to the topos that is central to several of the novels, that it is Isis who protects the heroine's chastity. We may think of Leucippe in Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Cleitophon*, Anthea in Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale*, or, best of all, Chariclea in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*.[120] At the same time, we have to accept, as I have already argued, that there may often have been a *décalage* between aspiration

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[117] J. Alvar, Marginalidad e integración en los cultos mistéricos, in F. Gascó and J. Alvar (eds.), *Heterodoxos, reformadores y marginados en la Antigüedad Clásica* (Seville, 1991) 71–90 at 72f.

[118] "Now aid me, goddess…that my Delia may watch through the night, in accordance with her vow, sitting all dressed in linen before your holy doors…".

[119] "But you, who through an excess of piety have caused my sufferings, when we are released from these nights, let us thrice make love's journey" (tr. J. Goold). Goold's text makes better sense than Barber's (OCT²), reading *nimium placata dolore es*.

[120] The more recent literature includes I. Stark, Religiöse Elemente im antiken Roman, H. Kuch (ed.), *Der antike Roman: Untersuchungen zur literarischen Kommunikation und Galtungsgeschichte* (Berlin 1989) 135–149; S. Wiersma, The Ancient Greek Novel and its Heroines: a Female Paradox, *Mnemosyne* 41 (1990) 109–123; Konstan 1994; R. Merkelbach, Novel and Aretalogy, in Tatum 1994, 283–95; Beck 1996. On this particular point note too: J. Hani, Le personnage de Charicleia dans les Éthiopiques: Incarnation de l'idéal moral et religieux d'une époque, *Bulletin de l' Association Guillaume Budé* 1978, 268–273; F. Napolitano, Leucippe nel Romanzo di Achille Tazio, *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia della Univ. di Napoli* 26 (1983–84) 85–101.

and reality, between the resolutions and commitments made at religious high-points, and the reality one found oneself living each day.

In the case of the Egyptian cults, we happen to possess a quite different source of evidence for the value-system, namely the aretalogies, the 'self-predications', the 'hymns'. None of the other cults can offer anything comparable. A number of related types of document existed in antiquity. Perhaps the most interesting for my purposes are the five surviving versions of a text evidently composed in Greek at Memphis in the Fayyûm around 100 BC or somewhat earlier, and generally, though perhaps somewhat incorrectly, known as aretalogies of Isis.[121] There is little point here in getting bogged down in this issue.[122] My own view is that the traditional term, although it does not accurately capture the entire content of these texts, has the advantage over other suggestions of accurately communicating their general purpose.[123]

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[121] I can dispense with references to the older literature because the documents are now available, with good texts, full bibliographies in *RICIS* (with a useful French translation) and/or Totti 1985. It should be noted that I group nos. 1–5 together as representatives of the Urtext at Memphis, but in fact only nos. 3–5 are identical, and nos. 1 and 2, i.e. the earliest versions, diverge in many important respects from the later standard text: 1) Maroneia (late II^{a}): *RICIS* 114/0202 = Totti no. 19; 2) Andros (I^{a}): *RICIS* 202/1801 = Totti no. 2; 3) Kyme (I–II^{p}): 302/0204 = Totti no. 1a (a composite text combining Kyme, Thessalonike, Ios and Diodorus); 4) Thessalonike (I–II^{p})*: RICIS* 113/0545 (fragment); 5) Ios (III^{p}): *RICIS* 202/1101(fragment). To these we may add some related texts: the prayers from Kios in Bithynia (I^{p}) (*RICIS* 308/0302 = Totti no. 5) and Cyrene (AD 103) (RICIS 701/0103 = Totti no. 4); the long self-predication of Isis in POxy. 1380 = Totti no. 20; the self-predication at the end of the Kore Kosmou (ap. Stobaeus 1.49.44 = Festugière and Nock, *Corpus Hermeticum* 4, frg. XXIII = Totti no. 3); the four Hymns by Isidoros, edited Vanderlip 1972 = Totti nos. 21–24 = Sanzi 2003, 206–13, Isis nos. 45.1–4 (I^{a}); cf. the translation by M. Gustafson in Kiley 1997, 155–58; and the hymns contained in a number of literary texts: e.g. Diodorus 1.27 (Bergman 1968, 27–43 = Totti no. 1a,b); Tibullus 1.7.29–48 (= Totti no. 7, cf. Alfonsi 1968; Koenen 1976); Apuleius, Met. 11.2; 5–6; 25.1–6. We could add some others, such as Aristides' so-called Hymn to Serapis (*Or.* 45) and a couple of minor texts of less relevance to the topic here.

[122] Longo 1969, 47–52 wanted to distinguish between sacred aretalogies and profane ones. If *aretai* are necessarily 'actions', divine ones must be too, so that the term aretalogy is appropriate; however the actual content of these texts goes far beyond the semantic field of *aretai*, so we should avoid the term. Grandjean 1975 used the word aretalogy quite unself-consciously. Henrichs 1984 wished to retain the traditional term on the grounds that the aretalogies' resemblance to one another nullifies the spontaneity of prayer. Totti 1985 introduced a number of different terms: *Selbstoffenbarung, Hymnus, Preis, Aretalogie, Enkomium* without clearly distinguishing them; through trying to show awareness of the various sub-genres involved, Bricault avoids many of the traditional terms in his entries in *RICIS*, which has led to a number of problems in the indices, cf. R.L. Gordon in *CR* 57.1 (2007) 232–4.

[123] P. Roussel, Un nouveau hymne à Isis, *REG* 42 (1929) 137–68 and W. Peek, *Der Isishymnos von Andros* (Berlin 1930) both rejected the then traditional word 'hymn', cf.

The fact that there is a range of analogous documents all devoted to praising one or other of the Isiac group of deities produced a considerable debate about their origins in the older literature. The various possible positions have been refined and improved in the course of this debate, but no consensus has been reached. Richard Harder argued in 1944 that these texts were written within the context of Egyptian religiosity.[124] After the war, this was disputed by A.D. Nock and Le Père Festugière, both of them Hellenists, but also in the late 1950s by the Egyptologist D. Müller.[125] The Hellenists seemed to be gaining the upper hand, but then the Swedish Egyptologist Jan Bergman intervened strongly in favour of an Egyptian background (Bergman 1968). Yves Grandjean, the editor of the earliest known version, from Maroneia, which explicitly identifies Isis with Demeter, was unable to rebut his arguments (Grandjean 1975). Nowadays, however, as so often with these older disputes, the entire debate seems pointless, since it has become clear, that, just as in the analogous cases of the Hermetic literature and the magical papyri, or even astrology, there can be no question of an either/or answer: these are all products of a complex process of cultural translation and symbiosis that affected both sides in equal measure, so that it makes little sense to weigh this thought against that and wave it as 'proof' of anything.

As I have made amply clear, the oriental cults of the Roman period were in fact a complex bricolage of elements drawn from high cultures notionally 'other' than Graeco-Roman, elements in each case irreversibly, even unrecognisably, conditioned by conquest, fragmentation, translation and reception, a reception that required, among other things, that they measure up to the implicit demands of Eleusinian cult. What is important therefore is not what they were, that is, had been, at some arbitrary point in the past, but how, why and where they were received, and the preconceptions in terms of which they could be

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Müller 1961, 15; E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Stuttgart 1912/1966) 149ff.; Festugière 1949. The term 'prayer' is very vague and marginalises many important features of the true aretalogies. I. Cazzaniga, Intorno ad alcuni epiteti di Iside nella litania di *POxy*. 1380, *Parola del Passato* 20 (1965) 233ff. once suggested the word 'litany'; O. Weinreich rather portentously offered 'Res Gestae Reginae Isidos', which of course never caught on: *Antike Heilungswunder* (Giessen 1909) 46 n. 7.

[124] R. Harder, *Karpokrates von Chalkis un die memphitische Isispropaganda* (Berlin 1944).

[125] A.D. Nock, *Gnomon* 21 (1949) 221–28 and Festugière 1949 both objected that all the relevant terms were Greek; Müller 1961 insisted on the degree of transformation that Egyptian Isiac themes had undergone in the transition to the Hellenistic world, a well-taken point.

regarded as cultural goods of a specific type of value.[126] With regard to the Egyptian cults, as we have seen, we happen to know from Plutarch that Manetho the Egyptian priest and Timotheus the Eleusinian co-operated in the creation of the cult of Sarapis (p. 59). He was to be Isis' new companion during the Hellenistic period, which provided these two master-alchemists with the opportunity to create an entire sub-set of new rituals. I would say it is no coincidence that we possess no aretalogies dating from earlier than the late second-century BC: there probably were none before that time, because they are a type of religious expression that was inspired and made possible by their joint work. We cannot of course tell whether they created a proto-aretalogy, since there is no relevant evidence; however I can certainly imagine that they were not content with merely drawing up a sketch-plan but that they got down to drafting an entire system of beliefs and rituals appropriate to their syncretistic creation—which would mean that there is no sense at all in asking whether the aretalogies are 'basically' Greek or Egyptian.

If that is so with regard to their form, the case is similar with regard to their religious value. They seem to me to be lists of virtuous actions worthy of reverence but also of emulation. They may be lists of divine acts, but their followers are invited to follow their example, so far as they can. In other words, we may properly call part of their content a set of ethical norms. It is precisely their status as hymns that confers upon them an undeniably didactic quality: they are not so much prayers as chanted mnemonics whose function is to transmit the value-system envisaged by the cult. They were probably not intended originally to be learned individually—there are too few copies for that—but to be recited collectively and thus learned by heart through constant repetition. The copies we possess were all votives intended to add distinction to the furnishings of the temple; and anyway only a few people could even read inscribed texts in Greek. No comparable inscriptions have been found in the Latin-speaking West. We therefore do not know whether there were translations of them into Latin, nor if there were analogous rituals there of collective chanting—at Rome we hear of a young man who held the post of *aretalogus*, but it is specifically said to be for texts

[126] Cf. J. Alvar, Isis preromana, Isis romana, in Rubio 1997, 95–107.

in Greek.[127] At any rate, the value-system surely did spread in the West too, and we have every reason to think that the contents of the aretalogies were intended to have universal or general application.

Παρ' ἐμοὶ τὸ δίκαιον ἰσχύει, declares Isis, "With me justice prevails" (Kyme §38).[128] The Maroneia aretalogy claims that Isis created justice so that mankind may live in equality just as we all alike, in the course of nature, must die (ll. 24–26: αὕτη τὸ δίκαιον ἔστησεν ἵν' ἕκαστος ἡμῶν, ὡς ἐκ τῆς φύσεως τὸν θάνατον ἴσον ἔσχεν, καὶ ζῆν ἀπὸ τῶν ἴσων εἰδῇ).[129] And so that they may live with one another and communicate, not simply men with women but everyone with everyone else, she instituted language, foreign languages for foreigners, Greek for the Greeks (ll. 26–28: αὕτη τῶν ἀνθρώπων οἷς μὲν βάρβαρον, οἷς δὲ ἑλληνίδα διάλεκτον ἔστησεν, ἵν' ἦι τὸ γένος διαλλάσσον μὴ μόνον ἀνδράσιν πρὸς γυναῖκας ἀλλὰ καὶ πᾶσι πρὸς πάντας).[130] She has bestowed laws, so that all the cities may flourish, since they are ruled not by violence with legal backing but by law without violence (ll. 29–31: [σ]ὺ νόμους ἔδωκας…τοι[γα]ροῦν αἱ πόλεις εὐστάθησαν, οὐ τὴν βίαν νομικὸν ἀλλὰ [τ]ὸν νόμον ἀβίαστον εὑροῦσαι).[131] These elements of the doxology all imply correlative behaviour on the part of worshippers. Moreover, telling the truth, and the fairness of the judicial system, are of great importance (Kyme §28f.; 37). As for the institution of marriage, the Maroneia text just refers to the union of Isis and Serapis (l. 17), implying its model function, adding later that children should honour their parents as though they were very gods, not simply fathers (ll. 31–33: σὺ τιμᾶσθαι γονεῖς ὑπὸ [τ]έκνων ἐποίησας, οὐ μόνον ὡς πατέρων, ἀλλ' ὡς καὶ θεῶν [φ]ροντίσασα).[132] The Kyme self-predication, however, shows much greater interest in the entire

[127] *AE* 1999: 349 = *RICIS* 501/0214, with the remarks of M.P. Del Moro, Via Latina 135: cronaca di un intervento di urgenza, *RAC* 75 (1999) 33–36. Presumably it was normally the duty of one of the priests to recite these texts.

[128] Cf. Kyme §16: ἐγὼ τὸ δίκαιον ἰσχυρὸν ἐποίησα.

[129] There is no correlate in the Kyme version.

[130] Cf. Kyme §31; in Maroneia 22–24, Isis invents writing, together with Toth-Hermes, καὶ τῶν γραμμάτων ἃ μὲν ἱερὰ τοῖς μύσταις, ἃ δὲ δημόσια τοῖς πᾶσιν, thus showing where the true priorities lie (in Kyme §3c this distinction is made in terms of hieroglyphs versus Demotic).

[131] The Kyme version distributes aspects of what we might call cosmic and social justice over different sections (§§12–14, 16–21, 25f., 28–30, 36–38, 40, 52), and names a number of specific crimes and abuses (tyranny, massacres, false oaths, legal entrapment, fraud, ignoring the rights of suppliants); cf. *Kore Kosmou* l. 6f. Totti.

[132] The same theme appears in Kyme §19.

theme. Isis declares for example: ἐγὼ γυναῖκα καὶ ἄνδρα συνήγαγον (§17); ἐγὼ συνγραφὰς γαμικὰς εὗρον §30; ἐγὼ στέργεσθαι γυναῖκας ὑπὸ ἀνδρῶν ἠνάγκασα §27; ἐγὼ τοῖς ἀστόργ<ω>ς γονεῦσιν διακειμένοις τειμω[ρ]ίαν ἐπέθηκα §20.[133] The Egyptian gods in fact maintained the fundamental values of the community, through the institution of the family based on asymmetrical heterosexual marriage, and regulated by a system of justice whose rules are set out in writing. Thanks to Isis, society has evolved beyond the early stages, where discord was typical. Harmony is thus a good, but even to make that claim is to concede that conflicts are going to persist: ἐγὼ τοὺς δικαίως ἀμυνομένους τειμῶ, "I honour those who defend themselves when they are in the right" (Kyme §37).

This structure of opposites reveals the extent to which the Isiac order sustained and supported the established order of things: οὐθεὶς δοξάζεται ἄνευ τῆς ἐμῆς γνώμης, "no one rises high without my assent". This is not so much because it was in itself reactionary as because those who composed and edited the aretalogies inevitably also had the opportunity of instrumentalising them in the interests of a conservative view of the natural and proper order of society. Isis offered a means of sublimating social asymmetry without herself willing it. As a deity, she is herself beyond political, social or economic action, but she is responsible for the fact that things are as they are and not otherwise. Indeed she claims that good and bad conduct, and by implication the social structure that sustains actual moral codes, are matters not of social convention but of Nature: ἐγὼ τὸ καλὸν καὶ αἰσχρὸ[ν] διαγεινώσκεσθαι ὑπὸ τῆς φύσεως ἐποίησα (Kyme §32; cf. Maroneia l. 33f.). To that extent those who enjoy positions of power are exonerated from responsibility so long as they do not actually go against the law; their privileges, and conversely the sufferings of the wretched, proceed from divine dispensation. In other words, there is no point in looking to the cult of Isis for social change.[134]

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[133] "I have caused women and men to lie together (in marriage)"; "I have invented marriage-contracts"; "I have laid it down as a natural law that women should be cherished by their husbands"; "I have decreed punishments for parents who do not cherish their children".

[134] The aretalogical theme of Isis' dominion makes her elective affinity with the powers that be quite plain. She may break the chains of destiny but she herself is also a 'tyrant' (ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ τύραννος πάσης χώρας, Kyme §3a) Henrichs 1984, 155–57 and Versnel 1990, 39–95 (with an analysis of the term 'tyranny' in relation Isis) have

It has been claimed that, despite being at the service of the established order, the cult encouraged a separate sphere for women, while never questioning their inferiority to men. Whether women did in fact use this opportunity to reduce their dependence on men in however unclear.[135] The very literary aretalogy from Andros puts the point quite bluntly: Δῶκα χαρ[ιζόμενα] πειθάνιον ἀνδρὶ γυναῖκα ἀμφοτέρω[ς τ' ἐδάμασσα…, "I have kindly given to husbands obedient wives, and subjected them both to the yoke". It would not be too cynical to see here a main reason for the appeal of the Egyptian cults to men: like Islam in West Africa, they offered to bolster the unstable authority of married men. It is even possible that the cult was of value as a means of encouraging 'positive dependence': from the early Principate the powers that be and the leaders of the Egyptian cults seem to have connived at turning the latter into an element of Roman culture that could effectively help integrate provincial populations into *Romanitas*. This would explain the high rate of participation by men, and avoid the need to postulate, as some models do, a male version of the cult and a female one (Kraemer 1992, 77). It is clear of course that both gender and status were important. That is, people's expectations of the cult varied in relation to such differences, but that is quite different from claiming that there were different cults. I would only say that the priests' version was substantially different from that of ordinary, less- or uneducated initiates. The difference here however lay not so much in the praxis itself as in their contrasting perceptions of it. Moreover, the fact that people's anxieties and needs differed, inter alia down the gender divide, facilitated the emergence of contradictory discourses within the cult of Isis. After all, the cult proposed an omnipotent goddess who was nevertheless always accompanied by a male (Alvar 1999): this sets up one model, of a dependent spouse happy at home, but at

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recently emphasised the political implications of the cult, which helps us to understand, to an extent, its attraction for men.

[135] The role of women in the cult, and their motives for joining it, have been much discussed of late. Many scholars have argued that the values it proclaimed, though overtly integrative, did encourage a certain autonomy and self-wareness: Heyob 1975; Dunand 1980; J. Alvar, Las mujeres y los misterios en Hispania, *Actas de las Quintas Jornadas de Investigación Interdisciplinaria: La mujer en el mundo antiguo* (Madrid 1986) 245–257; idem, La mujer y los cultos mistéricos: marginación e integración, in Mª.J. Rodríguez, E. Hidalgo and C.G. Wagner (eds.), *Jornadas sobre roles sexuales: La mujer en la historia y la cultura, Madrid, 16–22 mayo 1990* (Madrid 1994) 73–84; Mora 1990. Kraemer 1992, 71–79, who depends heavily on Heyob and Dunand, stresses the cult's ambiguity between traditionalism and innovation.

the same time another, that of a more emancipated and autonomous woman. Thus, despite the Andros text, two of the claims of the Kyme aretalogy seem to point in the same direction as the image of equal marriage proposed in the novels.[136]

There is one last point to make about the position of the Egyptian gods in the Roman world. To judge from the number of surviving bronze and terracotta statuettes, both Isis and Osiris seem quickly to have established themselves among the private deities of the household, sharing the *lararium* with the other gods specially favoured by each family.[137] It has been suggested that Osiris was adopted into this sphere as a result of the journey of Tibullus' patron, M. Valerius Corvinus Messala, to the Delta (cf. Tibullus 1.7.23–54). In this passage, Osiris appears as the protector of the family store-room, a god of agriculture, alongside the Penates and Vesta, but also as the god of the deceased members of the family and thus, like the Lares, crucial to the preservation of the Roman family through time. All this already in 28 BC.[138] It has also been remarked that, at any rate in the western Empire, there seems to have been no attempt to subject the Egyptian gods to further, 'Celtic' or 'Germanic', interpretation.[139] In the north-western provinces, they retained their difference, their distinctive character.

4. Moral Values in Mithraism

> Now when the watch is ended, now when the wine is drawn, Mithras, also a soldier, keep us pure till the dawn!
>
> R. Kipling, *A Song to Mithras* (from *Puck of Pook's Hill*, 1906)

[136] Cf. n. 120; also Kraemer 1992, 77; Konstan 1994.

[137] This no doubt had something to do with Isis' traditional role as κουροτρόφος, *lactans*, mother of Horus, cf. Müller 1969b; Tran tam Tinh 1973; Malaise 2005, 151f.

[138] Cf. Turcan 1996a, 90; Takács 1995, 79. The phenomenon is not confined to Roma and Ostia (cf. Bakker 1994, 41). Provincials probably took over the Egyptian gods into their *lararia* in the same way: small statuettes of these divinities, in bronze and terracotta, are after all widely disseminated over the Roman world (cf. *Mostra Iside*, 264–71 nos. IV 290–304; 571–73 nos. VI 33–38).

[139] U.-M. Liertz, Isis und ihre nordische Schwester, *Arctos* 37 (2003) 101–14; this applies even in the case of the three examples of Isis Noreia (*AE* 1954: 98 = *ILLPRON* 1181; *CIL* III 4809 = *ILLPRON* 151; *EpDatHeid* 014591).

The absence of a proper myth of Mithras means that we cannot analyse the cult's moral claims in the same manner as in these two cases. Moreover, the literary references are so few, and so tangential to this theme, that we cannot make much headway there either. These difficulties ought not however to discourage us, or induce us to imagine that the cult possessed no moral system.[140] One clear indication of this, and suggestive of a possible thematic continuity from Iranian culture into the Graeco-Roman world, is the frequent representation of Mithras shaking hands with Helios/Sol, which combines the idea of a contract or agreement with that of acceptance into a group of friends.[141] The gesture occurs repeatedly in Roman iconography to convey the moment of solemnisation of agreements, treaties, pacts, and also the expression of friendship, loyalty and alliance, but was also central to the Iranian conception of Miθra.[142]

Less certain evidence of such continuity in the ethical sphere is the theme of justice.[143] We do know of one inscription in Asia Minor where Mithras has the epithet δικαῖος.[144] This however is almost certainly due to his association with the Sun, the theme of the Sun's justice being both ancient and widespread in Anatolia. To be sure, the fifth-century BC Miθra-*Yašt* leaves no doubt of the close link between Iranian Miθra and the maintenance of justice, which is of course inherent in the idea of the sanctity of agreements and contracts; and in Iranian tradition he was one of the three judges of the dead at the Çinvat Bridge.[145] Gwyn Griffiths has argued that this concept of Mithras as judge was also present in the Roman cult, though the evidence for it is admittedly

[140] Cf. the arguments of J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, The Expansion of Mithraism among the Religious Cults of the Second Century, in Hinnells 1994, 195–216 at 197, in favour of the claim that Mithraism had a well-developed moral system and offered forgiveness of sins.

[141] Cf. Rostovtzeff et al. 1939, 122; LeGlay 1978; Merkelbach 1984, 61; Clauss 2000, 151f.

[142] On *miθra-* as the Avestan common noun for 'contract', see Gershevitch 1959, 26–30; cf. P. Thieme, The Concept of *Mitra* in Aryan Belief, in Hinnells 1975, 21–39; Merkelbach 1984, 4f.

[143] This was an important factor for Cumont, e.g. 1929, 144: "Mithra . . . est resté en Occident le dieu de la vérité et la justice".

[144] V. 18 (Tyana in Cappodocia). The text, which consists of the three words: θεῷ δικαίῳ Μίθρᾳ, is however as uninformative as might be.

[145] Cumont 1929, 147; Merkelbach 1984, 23f.; Griffiths 1982, 209f.; 1991, 313ff.

thin to the point of non-existence.[146] The initiatory scenes painted on the podia of the mithraeum at Capua near Naples can hardly be used to support the idea that punishment was one of the themes in Mithraic initiation.[147] The complete silence of the epigraphy suggests that Mithras' justice was not an especially important aspect in the western cult, if it existed at all.

Although it is good method to be sceptical with regard to Christian claims about the oriental cults, in this area as in others, a passage by Justin Martyr, dating from the mid-second century, alludes to the emphasis placed by Mithraists on δικαιοπραξία and itself cites a passage from Isaiah:

> Now, when those who hand down the mysteries of Mithras claim that he was born of a rock, and call the place where they initiate his believers a cave, am I not right in concluding that they have imitated that dictum of Daniel, "*a stone was cut without hands out of a great mountain*" [*Dan.* 2.34]? In similar fashion, have they not attempted to imitate all the sayings of Isaiah? For the demons urged the priests of Mithras to exhort their followers to perform righteous acts. [2] Here are the words of Isaiah which I must quote that you may know from them that this is so: "*Hear, you who are far off, what I have done; and they who are near will know My strength. The sinners in Zion have departed; trembling will seize the impious. Who will announce to you the everlasting place? He who walks righteously, and speaks truth, who hates iniquity and injustice, and keeps his hands clean from bribes; who stops his ears from hearing the unjust judgment of blood, who shuts his eyes from seeing evil; he will dwell in the lofty cave of the strong rock.* [3] *Bread will be given to him, and his water will be sure. You will see the King in his glory, and your eyes will look far off. Your soul will meditate on the fear of the Lord. Where is the scribe? Where are the counselors? Where is he who counts those who are nourished, the small and the great people? With whom they did not take counsel, nor knew the depth of the voices, so that they did not hear. A shameless people, and there is no understanding in him who hears*" [*Isaiah* 33.13–19].
>
> Dial. Tryph. 70.1–3, tr. Falls/Marcovich

It might be claimed that Justin is projecting onto the Mithraists moral demands that were in fact characteristic of Judaism or Christianity, so that he can claim that they are the result of diabolic imitation, just as he does in relation to the eucharist: ὅπερ καὶ ἐν τοῖς τοῦ Μίθρα μυστηρίοις παρέδωκαν γίνεσθαι μιμησάμενοι οἱ πονηροὶ δαίμονες…in

[146] The evidence is so poor that Griffiths, never very discriminating in his choice of evidence in these matters, is even reduced to citing HA *Commod.* 9.6: *sacra Mithraica homicidio vero polluit.*

[147] See the discussion below, Chap. 4.5.b.

the passage from the Apology. Against that, the theme of δικαιοπραξία occurs in no other Christian writer, and is extraneous to the well-known facts that Justin also cites about Mithras' birth and the word for the mithraeum. And in fact the most direct evidence we possess about the ethical requirements of Mithraism, a passage from Porphyry's *De antro*, tends to confirm what Justin says. Citing a discussion of the religious value of honey by Numenius and Cronius, Porphyry invokes the role played by honey, a pure and incorruptible substance, in the initiations to the Mithraic grade of *Leo*:

> ὅταν μὲν οὖν τοῖς τὰ λεοντικὰ μυουμένοις εἰς τὰς χεῖρας ἀνθ' ὕδατος μέλι νίψασθαι ἐγχέωσι, καθαρὰς ἔχειν τὰς χεῖρας παραγγέλλουσιν ἀπὸ παντὸς λυπηροῦ καὶ βλαπτικοῦ καὶ μυσαροῦ… καθαίρουσι δὲ καὶ τὴν γλῶσσαν τῷ μέλιτι ἀπὸ παντὸς ἁμαρτωλοῦ.[148]
>
> *De antro* 15

Numenius' conventional distinction between hands and tongue, between action and words, evidently stands for the totality of a person's social existence. We may here emphasise just three points. The words used to describe moral iniquities are common not merely in Greek moral texts of imperial date, such as Epictetus, but also occur repeatedly in early Christian contexts: Mithraism seemed to have rejected the same types of asocial, self-seeking behaviour as did popular philosophy and Christianity, attempting, like them, to model a sense of personal integrity, to clear a space for the individual seeking to reconcile the demands of maintaining social status with those of conscience. Secondly, the nice discrimination between different types of sin (the distinctions between τὸ λυπηρόν, τὸ βλαπτικόν, τὸ μυσαρόν and τὸ ἁμαρτωλόν at this period are by no means easy for us to grasp) suggests a considerable refinement of moral discussion within Mithraism and a certain interest in a kind of moral casuistry. Thirdly, purification is only necessary if one has polluted oneself by contact with something unclean in the world outside, in this case perhaps with women, indeed with anything that the world constructed by Mithraism wished to exclude. The mention of the mouth suggests that lying too was one of the failings scouted in the cult: in any hierarchical group, lying disrupts the mechanisms of

[148] "When they pour honey instead of water onto the hands of those being initiated into the grade Leo to purify them, they bid them keep their hands pure from everything that is wicked, harmful and defiling… They also purify their tongues from everything sinful" (tr. Arethusa ed.).

control and provides the subaltern with a means of escape from pressures to conform. We may surely conclude that Numenius' ritual, at the point of initiation into the main or 'normal' grade in the cult, indicates that the boundary in Mithraism between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' was expressed very largely in moral terms: initiation certainly included other types of ceremonies, but the sheer strangeness of 'washing' one's hands in honey, of all things, must have made this transition singularly memorable. For not only did it mark one's introduction into a world in which nothing could be taken for granted, where honey was not a saccharine but a form of fiery water, appropriate to one's new nature as a Lion, a creature of fire, but one where, at least ideally, only the moral demands of Mithras, now matter.[149]

In this context, a recent find is of great interest. In 1998 a small fourth-century mithraeum, partly cut out of soft rock, was discovered in fairly dramatic circumstances beneath a Christian church at a place called Hawarte some fifteen km north of Apamea in Syria. Between c. AD 360–380 its walls and ceiling were re-decorated with a series of important frescoes.[150] Three are particularly interesting in the present context, despite the fairly extensive damage they have suffered. That to the left of the cult-niche on the north wall shows a city-wall made of *opus quadratum* with an arch in the centre.[151] On top of the wall is a series of six horrifying severed heads. In some cases the skin is pale, in others brown or dark. Their hair is long and tangled, their mouths hang open, their eyes are lifeless. From each head a yellow line protrudes at an angle, perhaps a shaft of light, perhaps a gilded lance, which confirms

[149] Note line 7 at S. Prisca: *[qui] aur<ei>s humeris portavit more iuvencum*, "who has duly borne the bull on his golden shoulders" (of Mithras): Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965, 200 no. 7. Emphasis on *more*.

[150] Gawlikowski 1999; 2000; 2001; 2001 [2004]; the fullest published account is idem 2007, which includes colour photos. A monograph is in preparation. It has proved impossible to obtain photos of the most interesting frescoes; the reader is referred to Gawlikowski 2007, 343–6 esp. Colour figs. 12, 9 and 10 resp.

[151] The image may be a simplified form of the 'camp-gate' reverse type, so common on Tetrarchic silver coinage and struck inter alia at Antioch and Alexandria: *RIC* 6 (1973) 616–18 nos. 34–43 (Antioch); 661f. nos. 9–13; cf. E.A. Dumser, The Aeternae Memoriae Coinage of Maxentius: an Issue of Symbolic Intent, in L. Haselberger and J. Humphrey (eds.), *Imaging Ancient Rome: Documentation—Visualization—Imagination*. JRA Suppl. 61 (Portsmouth RI 2006) 107–18. Whereas in the western types there is a door, it is typical of these eastern ones that there is simply an open archway, as at Hawarte. The reverse legend on these coins is usually *virtus militum*.

the fact that all have been mastered and overcome.[152] A seventh head has fallen from the wall and lies on the ground. Nothing like this has ever been found in a mithraeum before, so that contextualisation is difficult and necessarily tentative. Gawlikowski himself has suggested that the scene represents an assault by Mithras on the gates of hell, or the defeat of a City of Darkness or Evil by the forces of Good, perhaps in some eschatological context of which we know nothing.[153] It has also been suggested that it recalls the descriptions of the horrifying deaths of the contract-breakers, both wicked spirits and human beings, at the hands of Mithras' innumerable weapons in the Miθra-*Yašt*. Knowledge of this authentically Iranian tradition may have reached Syria from Sasanid Iran via the traditional points of contact between the Iranian and Graeco-Roman worlds such as Nisibis or Zeugma—we are after all talking about the period immediately following Julian's inglorious Persian expedition, a period of relatively intense cultural contacts (Gordon 2001 [2004] 106–09). Although Mithraists in Syria would hardly have recognised any of what they may thus have learned about Iranian Mithra, they may have been able to respond to this theme, because it resonated with an important feature of the Roman cult, the battle against the unjust, the evil-doers. On this view, the scene would have no eschatological significance but simply be a form of celebration or praise of Mithras' saving intervention against evil (which is anyway one of the connotations of the epithet ἀνίκητος, *invictus*).[154]

At Hawarte, the entrance-door to the mithraeum was not, as usual, opposite the cult-niche but set into the west (left-hand side) wall. To the left and right of this entrance-doorway, immediately visible to anyone wanting to enter the mithraeum, there was a symmetrical fresco, now known as The Twin Riders (Gawlikowski 2007, 353 no. 2). In each case, only the lower part is preserved; that on the left of the doorway is more complete than the one on the right. A person dressed in magnificently embroidered, aristocratic Parthian tunic and trousers is standing facing the spectator in front of a splendidly-caparisoned

[152] Gawlikowski has reiterated his view of that they must be shafts of light (2007, 355); but if so it is strange that they are all the same length and are not shown as extending to the upper frame.

[153] 1999, 203f.; 2001 [2004] 187f.; 2007, 355.

[154] That is not to say that an eschatological reference can be entirely excluded: Mithraic eschatology was undoubtedly more complex than many allow, and different fates may have awaited one depending on the standing of the qualities one acquired or refined in the eyes of Mithras.

white stallion. To the right is the base of a tall bronze candelabrum or *turibulum* encircled by a snake. Gawlikowski suggests this must be a double image of Mithras (2007, 353); alternatively, they might be protective angels or minor divinities, though certainly not Cautes and Cautopates. The two paintings are not however exactly symmetrical. The one on the left is holding a two-headed, or Janus-faced, black man, who is crouching or dancing, and kept firmly shackled by means of a chain attached to each wrist. The other end of the chain is held by the Rider, who also holds a stick of the kind one might use to keep herded animals in order.[155]

The quality of these paintings, and the interest in aristocratic dress and fine horses, suggests something of the likely social status of the owners of the mithraeum (assuming that these frescoes in the pronaos are indeed connected with the temple). This is definitely not a small-town or humble milieu. The image of a black demon kept in chains had by this date been familiar in folklore in Asia Minor for at least a century and a half. In the *Acts of Peter* 22, written in the late second century, the senator Marcellus dreams that a horribly ugly, pitch-black ('Ethiopian') female demon danced in front of him, with chains round her neck and attached to her wrists. Although the significance of the Janus-head is unclear, the blackness of the demon at Hawarte is clearly negative.[156] The function of the Riders must have been to protect those entering and leaving the mithraeum from evil. The late date of the temple means that we have to treat this evidence cautiously, but it seems to suggest a situation similar to what we can glimpse in Julian. The images convey a sense of what the cult was supposed at this date to offer, which complements rather than contradicts evidence from earlier periods. Just as Julian's vision is not totally invented, so we should not dismiss Hawarte on the grounds that it derives from a late phase when the cult was more or less moribund. It is rather the expression of a belief that this world is suffused with evil against which Mithras and his allies fight, and where his worshippers can trust implicitly in his victory.[157]

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[155] Gawlikowski 2007, 353 with colour fig. 9 on p. 343.

[156] Lucian, *Philopseud*. 16 and 32; *Epist. Barnab*. 4.9; 20.1, cf. Gordon 2001 [2004] 111–14.

[157] The mythical image of Mithras carrying the bull on his shoulders, the *Transitus dei*, has thus apparently been interpreted in moral terms: Gordon 1988, 61.

The existence of an initiatory grade, albeit a low one, named στρατιώτης/*miles* may help to confirm the argument. The preparatory rituals for this presumably prepared the candidate physically and morally for the task of overcoming evil. As Turcan has pointed out (2000, 82) the metaphor of *militia* in a moral sense was widespread among philosophers and mystery-religions in the Principate; but Mithraism seems to have laid special emphasis on it.[158] Such rituals increased the discipline and solidarity of the group, the sense of serving a common goal, but also the idea of life as a battle.[159]

The third interesting fresco at Hawarte, likewise heavily damaged, is on the north wall of the pronaos (i.e. to the left of the entrance to the mithraeum), above the dado. It represents two beautifully-painted oversized lions facing one another; each is attacking and killing a black man. The best preserved of the latter, naked except for a red breech-clout, is falling backwards as the lion leaps on him; blood drips from his neck; the head of the victim of the left-hand lion is severed from the bleeding trunk.[160] The iconography of such a scene is evidently borrowed from the amphitheatre (the lions are apparently being supervised by a figure in the background, who may be a tamer or trainer), but it again has interesting implications for our present theme. In Gawlikowski's view, the black men must represent evil demons being subdued and destroyed by the forces of light.[161] Given the twin Riders and the ghastly heads, this would constitute a consistent programme thematising the struggle between good and evil. By implication the lions would be the servants of Mithras, as evidently on the well-known hunting-scenes in the mithraeum at Dura-Europos, where a large lion is running directly

[158] Tertullian's account of the supposed ritual of the rejection of the crown, however, simply implies that the Mithraic *Miles* was expected to declare his preference for Mithras over something which is not specified (*De corona* 15.3f. = Sanzi 2003, 414: Mithras no. 5.3). There is no reason to suppose that the sword plays an important part in the scenario; it is just one of several oddities about the passage.

[159] "Leur apprentissage de l'endurance physique au feu et au froid n'en fait non plus des ascètes désincarnés et coupés de l'humanité commune: tout au contraire!": Turcan 2000, 113; Alvar 1993a, 129. The *Miles* who leads the procession on one face of the Mainz Schlangengefäß is dressed in full 'Hellenistic' armour, though without a helmet (Text-fig. 4, p. 347).

[160] The fresco is very badly preserved; the clearest account is now Gawlikowski 2007, 354 no. 3 with colour fig. 9 on p. 343.

[161] Gawlikowski 2007, 354; earlier (2001 [2004] 188) he was inclined to see it as representing an eschatological battle between Light (= the Lions) and evil.

in front of Mithras' galloping horse.[162] Nevertheless the Hawarte scene goes much farther, transforming these helping lions into dramatic images of the destruction of evil.

By implication, victory over evil is not something haphazard, but, like the *fortuna* bestowed by Isis, a result of discipline achieved through *pietas*. Violent efforts are needed to succeed, but they too must have their proper measure. The lines from S. Prisca that refer to Mithras carrying the bull, and the reference there to the *maxima divum* (pp. 154, 375), present him as a moderate, disciplined hero, who carries out the duties assigned him by the gods. From this point of view, the tauroctony can be understood with reference to its iconographic model, Nike/Victoria sacrificing a bull. Here *pietas* and *victoria* become the supreme values represented in the paradigmatic ritual (cf. Zwirn 1989, 15). The Mithraist discovers in the cult-image both the core ethical message and the ideal model for his own behaviour.

It is moreover likely that specific grades, where they existed, were associated with, or in some way particularly responsible for, specific virtues. Mithraic ethics were apprehended in two complementary ways. Peer pressure, expressed above all in the synecdoche of the hand-shake, provided a stimulus to maintain the required moral demands. At the same time there seems to have been a process of ostensive instruction, conveyed in ritual. On the basis of the evidence provided, mainly at Dura-Europos, by the moral adjectives and images associated with each of the grades, M. Meslin has set out what he sees as the connections between the believer's moral progress and his advancement up the ladder.[163] This is probably too schematic, however; individual epithets were in all probability quite localised in their use, another example of the tendency in the cult towards 'idiolectal' coinages.[164] Given that it is practically all we have, however, the evidence from Dura, where there

[162] Rostovtzeff 1939, 112f. with pl. XIV.1–2. In the fresco on the North wall there are in fact two helping lions, since a small lion has replaced the helping snake that figures in the version on the South wall. No lion (and no Mithras) is preserved in the hunting scene on the South wall of the Hawarte mithraeum (Gawlikowski 2007, 358 no. 18 with figs. 17 and 17a on p. 359).

[163] Meslin 1985, 179ff.; cf. Gordon 1972, 106–10; Francis 1975, 441–43; also the table of the epithets at Dura, Gordon 1980, 41.

[164] Cf. R.L. Gordon, Mystery, Metaphor and Doctrine in the Mysteries of Mithras, in Hinnells 1994, 103–24.

clearly was a system of grades, even if there may not have been seven, needs to be given due weight.[165]

The individual initiate (*syndexios*) is regularly given the epithet ἀγαθός.[166] Though hardly a discriminating word, this makes the general moral aim of Mithraism quite clear.[167] At Rome, by contrast, the individuals composing his Mithraic group as a whole are described by the founder of one late third-century mithraeum as *hilares*, joyful.[168] We might speculate that the 'message' to be spread by the *Corax*, Raven, the lowest grade, named for the raven that brought Mithras his message, perhaps concerned the virtues of Mithras and his cult.[169] The grade *Miles* surely applied the military virtues to the Mithraic brotherhood; that in turn must have encouraged an elective affinity between the cult and the army. At Dura, the grade's usual epithet is ἀκέραιος, perfect, uncontaminated, pure.[170] It must be admitted, however, that from this point on the epithets become less concerned with moral qualities, more with the internal logic of the grade. Thus the Duran epithet for *Leo* is ἁβρός, splendid, fresh, charming.[171] Porphyry tells us that *Perses*, the fifth grade, for which Dura provides no usable evidence, was connected with the protection of the harvest (φύλαξ καρπῶν) and was therefore also connected with honey, because it keeps things from going rotten.[172] At Dura there is no grade *Heliodromus*, and στερεωτής, whatever it means, seems to do duty for it; the standing epithet seems to be σοφιστής, which certainly implies a virtue, but hardly a moral one.[173]

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[165] On the problems raised by the evidence for the grades, see Chap. 4.5.b below.

[166] Rostovtzeff et al. 1939, 120 no. 858 = V. 60 (c. 250 AD). Another very general epithet is εὐσεβής: Rostovtzeff 1939, 124; again it can hardly be considered anything more than a vague pro-word.

[167] Meslin's claim that the word occurs at Dura in relation to *Nymphus*, the second grade, is a mistake due to taking over Vermaseren's entry s.v. V. 63, without checking Rostovtzeff 1939, 124, where Cumont does not mention the matter, and indeed approves Wickstead's suggestion that the ordinary epithet at Dura for *Nymphus* is νέος.

[168] *AE* 1937: 231 = 1950: 199 = V. 423, *syndexi hilares*. A relationship between this state of mind and initiation is clearly implied by the rest of the text, a state that evidently distinguishes initiates from non-initiates.

[169] Another mid-III^{p} votive, from the Emporium area of Rome, describes a Corax as ἱερός: *IGVR* 107f. = V. 473f. This epithet later became stereotyped: for example, the late fourth-century Palazzo Marignoli texts speak of initiations named *hierocoracica* (*CIL* VI 751b = V. 403 (376 AD). This was evidently a development intended to distinguish the grade from the bird. ἱερός apparently does not occur at Dura.

[170] Rostovtzeff et al. 1939, 120 no. 857 = V. 59.

[171] Rostovtzeff et al. 1939, 120 no. 856 with p. 124 = V. 58.

[172] *De antro* 16 = Sanzi 2003, 420: Mithras no. 8.4; Merkelbach 1984: 115f.

[173] Rostovtzeff et al. 1939, 123.

It thus seems that emphasis was laid in the early stages of membership of a Mithraic group on fairly anodyne, generalised and non-specific moral qualities, which nevertheless pointed in a consistent direction. It goes without saying that such qualities were also in keeping with the dominant official ethics of the wider society. Of greater *de facto* importance than these rather formulaic virtues, I think, were the qualities tacitly encouraged and favoured: obedience, self-discipline, self-examination and moral seriousness, in order to gain the attention and appreciation of the god. The cult thus tended to favour social risers.[174]

However in a complex society desires and aims are extremely varied—even antithetical to one another. They cannot be meaningfully reduced to a single ethical scenario. As I stressed at the beginning of this chapter, a variety of value-systems may co-exist, not merely in the wider social formation but also in any one cult. The real situation was undoubtedly infinitely more complicated than what we can ascertain on the basis of our very limited information. Despite its notorious gender exclusivity, however, the integrative potential of Mithraism is clear. It was not troubled by the type of sexual or marital issues that we have seen causing problems in the other cults, nor was it denounced for undermining the family or seducing the young from the path of virtue, as happened in the case of Christianity.[175] Indeed, part of the cult's appeal was its masculine exclusiveness, which favoured the development of a specifically male ethic of asceticism, an ethic fitted for those for whom the sentimentalisation of marriage held no attraction.

Just two further points here. The first concerns the cult's aims. Many people erroneously suppose that all religions have a sort of universalist tendency or ambition. In the case of Mithraism, such an ambition has often been taken for granted and linked to another no less questionable assumption, that there was a rivalry between Mithras and Christ for imperial favour. Despite Diocletian and the Tetrarchs' famous dedication *D(eo) S(oli) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) fautori imperii sui* at Carnuntum in AD 308, it is far from clear that there was ever any desire on the part of the political centre to turn Mithraism into the main ideological support of

[174] On all this, see Gordon 1972; Merkelbach 1984, 160f.; Meslin 1985, 179–81; Clauss 2000, 39–41.

[175] This was one of Celsus' criticisms mentioned by Origen, *Contra Cels.* 3.55; it tells us something about the methods of proselytism, cf. J.A. Francis, *Subversive Virtue: Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World* (University Park PA 1995) 156f.; also the essay by my late friend F. Gascó, El Pastor de Hermas y la familia, *ARYS* 1 (1998) 207–11.

the régime.[176] The various strands of the public cult of *Sol Invictus* had little connection with the homonymous divinity in Mithraism (Berrens 2004). If Christianity had failed, the Roman Empire would never have become Mithraist.[177] This doubt about the cult's universalist aims leads on to the second point. The reverse of the appeal to a certain kind of man was that the cult sharply restricted its potential audience and could therefore hardly develop into a genuinely universal religion. The cult's failure to recover after the mid third century, despite some efforts by imperial officials to re-establish it, not least in the army, must have been due largely to its self-imposed gender restrictions.[178]

[176] *CIL* III 4413 = *ILS* 367 = V. 1698.

[177] I refer of course to the famous flourish by E. Renan: "On peut dire que si le christianisme eût été arreté dans sa croissance par quelque maladie mortelle, le monde eût été mithriaste", *Histoire des origines du christianisme, VII: Marc-Aurèle et la fin du monde antique* (Paris 1883) 579.

[178] For the efforts to restore the cult after mid-century, see Clauss 2000, 28f.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RITUAL SYSTEMS

> El cuerpo ha creado el espacio, como el agua crea el recipiente.
>
> *Sherezade*[1]

We come now to the sub-system in my original scheme for which we possess the most extensive evidence and which has therefore received most attention in the scholarly literature. After some introductory remarks on the function of ritual in general, I propose systematically to discuss the main rituals practised by each of the mysteries. It may however be as well first to say something about the notion of ritual within the wider context of a religious system. Ritual has been defined as a "type of behaviour characteristic of, and recognised by, a given group, whose repeated performance by individuals is taken as a sign of their membership".[2]

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[1] "Solid bodies gave rise to space just as water gives rise to its receptacle". Quoted from the translation of *1001 Nights* by P. Martínez Montávez (Madrid 1977) 108.

[2] F. Marty, Le rite et la parole, in AA.VV. 1981b, 67. I do not think this an ideal formulation but it is sufficiently elementary not to arouse too many hackles. It has the merit of raising the issue of behaviour, which is always historically conditioned (albeit possibly over the longue durée), rather than appealing to timeless continuity. I would however be inclined to replace the word behaviour with the phrase "act or acts" or even "gestures or series of gestures", since these terms highlight the importance of detail in ritual analysis. Marty's formulation also picks up the social element of ritual, even though it may be performed by a single individual as well as by a collectivity. Finally, it refers to the function of ritual, its role in maintaining social cohesion. There is no need to stress 'religious' here, since the members of a football team or a group of pop fans may develop their own rituals. However, the functions of ritual are in fact very varied, so that different perspectives will legitimately highlight different accounts. If we take prayer, for example, it is hard to decide whether its main function is to affirm group cohesion or to set up a specific relation between the person who performs the prayer and the supernatural. One conception of 'function' will stress the first, another the second. If we take all the individual cases together we might arrive at yet a third view, that its function is not to maintain cohesion but difference, since individual desire can more easily be manipulated in a prayer-régime. If this seems excessively cynical, think of Q. Mucius Scaevola (cos. 95 BC = *RE* Mucius no. 22), who, though pontifex maximus, is said to have claimed that, of the three types of deities, those of the poets, the philosophers and the *principes civitatis*, only the last were of any value, on the grounds that it was necessary that the ordinary people should be deceived in matters of religion, *expedire…falli in religione civitates* (Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 4.27 = *IAH* 1 p. 102f. no. 7 =

In addition to sociological definitions of this kind, the role of emotions and shared experience in the ritual process has recently been stressed.[3] What interests me about the rituals of the oriental cults is the evidence they offer of the dialectical relation between two opposed tendencies, towards social integration on the one hand, and towards continuing marginality on the other. I see these tendencies working both at the individual and the collective level. As regards the individual, personal transformation had to navigate between liminality and participation, both during one's own initiation(s) and in continuing membership of a cult whose politico-religious status was ambivalent. At the group level, the mysteries were historically conditioned by the ambivalent attitudes of the wider society; their social catchment meant that they could never enjoy an unequivocal status. Up to a point, we can summarise this institutionalised ambivalence by invoking Victor Turner's contrasting notions of liminality and *communitas*.[4]

1. Religion and Ritual

λέγω δὲ πλασματῶδες τὸ πρὸς ὑπόθεσιν βεβιάσμενον

Aristotle, *Met.* M 7, 1082b3f.[5]

Varro *RD* 1 frg. 7 Agahd = frg. 27 Condemi, relegated by B. Cardauns to the appendix to the fragments of Bk 1 [1 p. 37 frg. V; cf. 1 p. 18 under frg. 7; cf. 2, pp. 139–43] on the grounds that it may be from Varro's *Logistoricus Curio de cultu deorum*).

[3] Chaniotis 2006, 211–38; S. Scullion, Festivals, in Ogden 2007, 190–203 at 201–3.

[4] Cf. V.W. Turner, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure* (London 1969). Liminality, derived of course from *limen*, corresponds to the notion of marginality, not in the sense of something foreign but as the boundary or border structurally required to define a centre, *communitas* in Turner's jargon, the nucleus or core of the system. Turner not only defines both concepts but illustrates the inter-relation of the liminal with the *communitas* by means of concrete examples. I do find the general scheme stimulating but it is difficult to apply his work directly to my case, since the rituals he deals with are a mainstream part of the cultures he is discussing, with their own specific religious reality: analysis of the rituals aids in understanding the wider society. In my case I am dealing with adaptations of foreign systems inserted secondarily into a pre-existing socio-cultural order, so that there can be no question of a precise fit between the two. I also rather share the doubts of Bourdieu 2001, 175 about whether Turner has in fact added much of enduring value to van Gennep's insights.

[5] "By a fiction I mean a forced statement made to suit a hypothesis" (tr. W.D. Ross).

This is not the place for an extensive enquiry into Aristotle's claim; I want simply to make a few points relating to the place of ritual in a given religious system and a given social context.[6] Myth cannot exist without a society to tell it. The performance of ritual by a group or its constituent individuals will be still more a matter of deliberate intent, since ritual is directly linked to the everyday life of the individual, family, institution or whole society. Correct performance is the sole guarantee that the ritual will not become distorted: wilful alteration is inhibited by the requirement of fidelity to a specific sequence of actions. At the same time, individual participation, personal performance, provides the crucial link between ritual and religious thought.[7] Rituals supply the stage where the drama of the myth is played out.[8] They are the space, as Loisy put it, where humans collaborate actively in the gods' work.[9]

On the other hand, the ritualisation of religious ideas is a highly effective means of ideological control. Virtually all types of claim to

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[6] Bell 1997 is an excellent introduction, mainly for students, with a clear overview of the development of scholarship in this area, and of modern trends. I have also made use of many other discussions. Among these I may mention: F. Bousquet, "Et la chaire se fit Logos…". Essai sur la réaction philosophique au rite, in AA.VV. 1981b, 33–66. Despite its promising title, I would not recommend O. Wikström, Liturgy as Experience. The Psychology of Worship: A Theoretical and Empirical Lacuna, in Ahlbäck 1993, 83–100.

[7] The relation between individual and collectivity in ritual contexts has traditionally, since Freud's *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1930), been the focus of psychology. The work of R. Girard, particularly *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore and London 1977, orig. ed. 1972), can be seen as a direct continuation of this line of thought; cf. J. Ries, Le sacré et l'histoire des religions, in idem (ed.), *L'expression du sacré dans les grandes religions, 1: Proche-Orient ancien et traditions bibliques*. Homo Religosus 1 (Louvain-la-Neuve 1986); J. Greisch, Une anthropologie fondamentale du rite: René Girard, in AA.VV. 1981b, 89–119; F. Dumas-Champion, Le sacrifice ou la question du Meurtre, *Anthropos* 82 (1987) 135–49; there has even been conferences devoted, at least partly, to his ideas and methods: P. Demouchel (dir.), *Violence et vérité autour de R. Girard. Colloque de Cerisy* (Paris 1985); R.G. Hamerton-Kelly (ed.), *Violent Origins. Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (Stanford 1987). Some of his sympathisers find applications of his ideas in the myths of Cybele, Isis or Mithras; but from my point of view they are quite unusable. The idea of a mimetic reproduction of aboriginal violence makes some sense of individual behaviour, I suppose, but not of collective action, which needs to be explained in quite different terms. This is of course also the problem with the central theses of W. Burkert, *Homo Necans:The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* (Berkeley 1983) [orig. ed. 1972], since the means, and point, of the transmission from the Palaeolithic remain wholly obscure. For recent and current tendencies, cf. Rudhardt and Reverdin 1981; Grottanelli and Parise 1988; H.S. Versnel, Ritual Dynamics: The Contribution of Analogy, Simile and Free Association, in Stavrianopoulou 2006, 317–28.

[8] Cf. Sami-Ali, *L'Espace imaginaire* (Paris 1974) 15f.; at greater length: G. Durand, *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire* (Paris 1992).

[9] A. Loisy, *Essai historique sur le sacrifice* (Paris 1920) 61.

hegemonic authority involve such ritualisation. The religious behaviour of the masses is thereby subjected to the control of those who claim the right to manage relations between men and gods. Institutionalised religion thus has a key role in the formation and consolidation of relations of inequality established by state systems. Where religious experience is not subject to such regulation, we may properly speak of religiosity. In other words, religion is found in societies where there is a state, whereas non-state societies see no need to control relations between individual and the gods so tightly. Religion thus involves the control of religious impulses, which of course implies nothing about the complexity of the latter: as we know from the famous cases of the Nuer, the Zande, the Dinka and the Dogon, the religiosity of non-state societies may be at least as complex as the religion of stratified societies. Since for me religion can claim no higher ethical or other value, but is simply a secondary product of the drive towards institutionalised inequality, there can be no question here of asserting an evolutionary scheme from savagery to civilisation. Nor do I view the relation between the universe of religious thought and its individual or collective manifestation in terms of qualitative, i.e. value-laden, differences.

Once religion has established control over the expression of religious feelings, rituals end up by regulating more or less the whole of every-day life, so that every social act (e.g. birth, marriage, death, agreements, performatives), and every aspect of production (e.g. sowing, harvesting, making pots, sailing) has to be accompanied by some appropriate sacralising performance. The rituals come to dominate human life. Conversely, structural changes in society demand changes at the ritual level, whether by the introduction of new forms, or by attributing new meanings to existing rituals. The ritual order is thus by no means static but subject to the demands of changing social needs.[10] This means that the analysis of ritual is extremely tricky. The

[10] Cf. Turcan 1992b, 215: "Ces mystères ne se perdent pas dans la nuit des temps et ne procèdent pas (ou pas seulement) d'une réaménagement des liturgies liées aux initiations 'primitives' mais…il est arrivé un moment où des hommes et les femmes ont fabriqué un rituel pour répondre à un besoin, aux mutations des mentalités ou de conditions de vie". J. Scheid, Rituel et écriture à Rome, in A. Blondeau and K. Schipper (eds.), *Essais sur le rituel, 2: Colloque du Centenaire 1987* (Paris and Louvain-la-Neuve [1995]) 1–15, argues that there were no full transcriptions of rituals at Rome, despite the existence of well-known texts on these topics, since the details were transmitted by word of mouth; as Numa claimed: οὐ καλῶς ἐν ἀψύχοις γράμμασι φρουρουμένων τῶν ἀπορρήτων, it is not right that such religious arcana should be kept in lifeless texts (Plutarch, *Numa* 22.2). G. Dumézil, La tradition druidique et l'écriture: le vivant et le

ritual may appear to contain a sacralised version of ancient elements of the myth (whether with reference to the time of composition or to the imaginary *illud tempus*) but in fact offer something new, either a re-reading of the symbolism amounting to a new interpretation, or the adoption of something completely novel.[11]

For Durkheim, ritual serves to suffuse the profane with the sacred. The idea of society is the 'soul of religion'. The sacred is a projection of the collectivity just as the ritual process is the sacralisation of the community's own actions. But this is to put the cart before the horse: such a formulation absurdly claims that there must have been a collective agreement to sacralise the community. So far from valorising relations of social solidarity, the Durkheimian view subordinates everything to the community, so that the established order is hypostasised beyond all human action and thought; the individual plays only a negative and passive role. Religious life rests "at least partly on the failure to recognise

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mort, in *Cahiers pour un temps* (Paris 1981) 325–38: "C'est donc par les yeux et l'oreille que le néophyte s'initiait aux gestes rituels précis, de sa jeunesse, aux côtés de son père". On the other hand, it is familiar that in the Hellenistic period at least some attempt was made by kings, notably the Ptolemies already in the third century BC, to control private (Dionysiac) religious groups by requiring the presentation to the authorities of a sealed (if the restoration is correct) copy of the *hieros logos* and a statement of its unchanged transmission through three generations: *BGU* 1211 = *SB* 7266, tr. Hunt and Edgar, *Select Papyri* (Loeb) 2 no. 208, with M.-T. Lenger, *Corpus des ordonnances des Ptolémées*. Mémoires de l'Académie royale de Belge 57 (Brussels 1964) 68f. no. 29; Fraser 1972, 1: 204 with nn. 114f. Such requirements may be the origin of written texts in these cults during the Imperial period, when it seems clear that such knowledge was available, either by profane means, such as novels, or through liturgical texts, in the case of the cult of Isis (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.4.35), and possibly Mithras.

[11] There are two main dynamic approaches to ritual. On one view, its effect on the external world is to alter actual practice, as suggested in the main text; alternatively, it may be understood as a sort of time-regulator, such that the dynamics of the ritual have a knock-on effect in the wider culture (all this is quite independent of the famous debate over cyclical versus linear conceptions of time started by M. Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return, or Cosmos and History* [New York and Henley-on-Thames c. 1954; orig. ed. 1948], on which see AA.VV., *L'éternel retour: conférences et débats.* Publ. de la Faculté des Lettres, Arts et Sciences Humaines de Nice, no. 9 [Paris 1992]). See D. Sabbatucci, Storia e metastoria, in idem 1978, 15–32; P.-J. Labarrière, Le rite et le temps, in AA.VV. 1981b, 13–32; E. Campi, Rite et maîtrise du temps, in Centilivres and Hinard 1986, 131–37: "Nous partons du postulat selon lequel la nécessité de certains rituels va de pair avec la nécessité de contrôler le temps… Temps et rituels se répètent ainsi de façon circulaire, dans un éternel retour à un prototype mythique qui évacue toute référence à l'avenir, un avenir impensable puisqu'il ne se différencie pas de ce qui a été. Or nier l'avenir c'est abolir le temps et c'est surtout nier la mort" (p. 131f.). I would particularly recommend G. Mazzoleni, Il tempo ciclico riconsiderato, in Bianchi 1986b, 69–77.

that religious ideas are symbolic representations of social reality".[12] As many have pointed out, this is absurd.[13] I would argue that the sacred cannot be the projection of a social consensus but is rather the opposite: it is a theoretical construction to justify the on-going development of social inequality, projected as the responsibility of beings of another, and superior, order of existence. There is thus no point in mere humans kicking against the pricks. The fiction, Aristotle's τὸ πλασματῶδες, is taken as a straightforward description of a fact. However, as in the case of Rousseau's social contract, the beneficiaries of the construct are all to clearly involved in its formation. Once again, the question *cui bono* retains its value in the analysis. Conversely, ritual, as the cyclic reproduction of this symbolic order, helps reinforce perceived reality; and when the latter changes, as it is bound to do, retains its power to act as an ideological brake by interpreting change as a manifestation of divine will.[14]

In the light of such considerations, it is only from the perspective of the interests of the socially privileged that we can understand Cazeneuve's claim that religious thought presupposes the existence of a principle that sustains the human condition, a principle mediated by ritual.[15] For such a claim presupposes that all members of the 'human condition' live under the same objective conditions; alternatively, if we are to assume that all human beings have the same 'real' interests irrespective of their objective situation, we would have to invoke some artificial homogenising agent capable of making these interests similar. In itself, mere participation in ritual cannot ensure that the 'principle' sustains everyone equally, ritual being notoriously concerned with hierarchy and status.

On the other hand, every religious system fosters different ways, individual and collective, of approaching the divine. Many different situations may co-exist within the same system, as we can see from

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[12] Skorupski 1976, 35; 187.

[13] E.g. S. Lukes, *Émile Durkheim. His Life and Work. A Historical and Critical Study* (Harmondsworth 1973) 477–84; of course, Durkheim's view of religion is anthropocentric, but only in the sense that it is not cosmocentric: Skorupski 1976, 31f.

[14] Etymologically, 'rite' and 'ritual' are derived from Latin *ritus*, religious observance(s), ceremonies, adj. *ritualis*, which in turn seems to share a common IE sense with Skr. *ṛtám*, Avestan *ašm*, both meaning 'order, in conformity with what right practice demands': Ernout-Meillet p. 574 s.v.; Walde-Hofmann 1: 437 s.v.; cf. J. Ries, Rites d'initiation, in idem 1986b, 30.

[15] J. Cazeneuve, *Sociologie du rite* (Paris 1971) 282f.

the fact that the rituals of Greek and Roman civic religion are very different from those specific to the oriental cults. At the same time, as social complexity increases, relations between gods and humans acquire more complex forms of expression. That is why ritual can properly be examined from different theoretical perspectives in accordance with individual inclination.[16] My own view is that rituals are not independent or autonomous forms of action but only make sense within a larger symbolic framework. They are therefore best understood as performances or dramatisations whose function is to connect the real with the imaginary in a variety of ways, thus conferring life and vitality upon the fiction of the divine Other. It is the direct experience of such enacted performance that enables the believer to accept the fiction as though it were indeed from time to time part of his or her lived reality.

2. Rituals in the Mysteries

> *Nolite annuis sacris quaerere funus alienum. Vestris potius funeribus parate solacia per annos singulos.*[17]
> Firmicus Maternus, *De errore* 2.8 (ed. R. Turcan)

The fact that everyday experience and the fiction of religion are constantly in dialectic with one another must inhibit any attempt to offer a monolithic account of the rituals of the mystery-component of the oriental cults. It would of course be much easier if one could, certainly at the level of interpretation, but the operation of the dialectic over time makes change inevitable. It is therefore methodologically unsound to assume that a ritual existed unchanged long before or long after the point at which we have information about it; but equally we cannot argue that the absence of a given ritual at one period means that it could not have existed at another—a point of particular importance when we come to rituals known only from inherently unreliable Christian sources, which are never mere 'reports', and always have their own distorting agenda. On the other hand, our documentation is so

[16] Useful further discussion in L. Bouyer, *Rite and Man: Natural Sacredness and Christian Liturgy*, tr. J. Costelloe (Notre Dame 1963 = *Le rite et l'homme: sacralité naturelle et liturgie* [Paris 1962]); J. Greisch (ed.), *Le rite*. Philosophie 6: L'Institut catholique de Paris (Paris 1981); Bell 1997. On psychological approaches, see B. Beit-Hallahmi and M. Argyle, *The Psychology of Religious Behaviour. Belief and Experience* (London and New York 1997).

[17] "Give up seeking someone's else's corpse each year: you would do better to spend your time year by year seeking comfort in the face of your own death!"

lacunate that there can equally be no question of attempting a proper history of ritual development, except in a few cases, say the *taurobolium/criobolium*, where there is sufficient epigraphic evidence to reconstruct a historical development, though even here, as we shall see, sharply different accounts have been offered. A fundamental problem that we shall encounter repeatedly in the following pages is the legitimacy of the traditional habit of generalising about ritual practice, mystery and other, on the basis of highly fragmentary evidence.

It used to be taken as an article of faith that official or civic religion in antiquity was largely distinct from the true feelings of the people. The idea was that the success of the mysteries was due to the fact that their rituals made a more direct appeal to their adherents. As I pointed out in the Introduction, this view needs substantial modification. MacMullen and Lane Fox showed in the 1980s that traditional public religion, both in the Latin West and in the Greek East, was by no means as alien from ordinary people as had often been imagined. It has been easy to show that city populations participated enthusiastically in public rituals throughout the Principate, just as they did earlier.[18] So much is by now commonplace. Nevertheless, even MacMullen was still inclined to distinguish between civic cult and 'dynamic cults', and it seems to me clear that official religion could not often offer experiences comparable to those available in the oriental cults, whose deities were able to communicate a particular sense of 'standing by' or 'being with'.[19] Something of the dramatic impact of their rituals can be gauged from Firmicus Maternus' feeble advice in the epigraph to this section that pagans should think more about their own deaths than those of their gods. Inasmuch as rituals are a crucial means of constructing a rela-

[18] MacMullen 1981; Lane Fox 1986; Alvar, Blánquez and Wagner 1995; Beard, North, Price 1998, esp. chap. 7; B. Dignas, A Day in the Life of a Greek Sanctuary, in Ogden 2007, 165–77; N. Belayche, Religious Actors in Daily Life: Practices and Related Beliefs, in Rüpke 2007d, 275–91. Changes certainly did take place here too, though the subtle work required to show them is not often done: K. Hopkins, From Violence to Blessing: Symbols and Rituals in Ancient Rome, in A. Molho, K. Raaflaub, and J. Emlen (eds.), *Athens and Rome, Florence and Venice: City States in Classical Antiquity and Mediaeval Italy* (Stuttgart 1991) 479–98.

[19] R. Turcan has however argued that the aims and modality of ancient festival largely overlapped with those of initiation: La fête dans les rituels initiatiques, in A. Motte and C.M. Ternes (eds.), *Dieux, fêtes, sacré dans la Grèce et la Rome antiques. Colloque de Luxembourg 24–26 oct. 1999* (Turnhout 2003) 7–21. He highlights the cathartic effects of music, dance and song, collective eating and the busyness of the games. This seems to me not to make enough of the differences between the Eleusinian and later mysteries.

tion between men and gods, they will offer a spectrum of possibilities, choices and competences in this regard.[20] If we posit such a spectrum, mysteries of all types, but particularly those of the imperial period, will be well up towards the pole favouring the establishment of close personal relations between deity and adherent, indeed in a manner that would traditionally have been considered unmanly or even superstitious by the civic élite.[21]

This relation was however mediated by a process of learning. As one of the institutions characteristic of complex hierarchical societies, religion tries to avoid spontaneous contact between believer and deity, which is characteristic of the religiosity of non-state societies where intermediary roles are not so well developed.[22] The oriental cults, with their mysteries, developed in an historical context in which they could no longer refuse such regulated access to divinity, as is evident both in the specific composition of their rituals and in the formalised process of learning that enabled the initiand to become a full member of the group. As usual, the responsibility for this situation was attributed to the deity, since it is the gods who, through specific signs, such as those given in dreams, choose those who are considered worthy of being initiated (e.g. Apuleius, *Met.* 11.19, 21, 22, 26–7, 29–30). Thus begins a habit of submission all too accommodating to the interests of a highly fragmented state with rather few spare resources, beyond coin-types, for nurturing ideological commitment to itself. The hope of belonging to a select group, a θίασος of some kind, even if only for the duration of a ritual, which was to be met with again in the afterlife, was a further incentive to accept a degree of difference, even alienation, sweetened as it was by the promise of admission to a secret that only the chosen can share.[23] This presupposes a process of learning—or perhaps better 'apprehension' in the sense 'a perception that is comparatively simple, direct and immediate and has as its object something considered to be

[20] Cf. V. Pirenne-Delforge, Image des dieux et rituel dans le discours de Pausanias, *MEFRA* 116 (2004) 811–25.

[21] Veyne 1989, 185f.; 1999, 434–39; Henrichs 1998.

[22] Cf. the classic study by I.M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion* (Harmondsworth 1971 and often repr.).

[23] E.g. the 'new' funerary gold leaf from Pherai in Thessaly, where the dead (woman) requests the uncertain addressee πέμπε με πρὸς μυστῶ[ν] θιάσους: Parker and Σταματοπούλου 2004, 6, with their commentary, p. 8: "It…strongly suggests that the dead person may have been a member of a θίασος, at least for the duration of a particular ritual, and that the membership is part of his or her qualification for a blessed lot in the afterlife".

directly and non-discursively understandable'[24]—sufficiently absorbing or attractive to transform objective oppression into subjective mystical delight.

It is however extremely difficult to say quite how this knowledge or understanding was communicated. There is no direct evidence for formal instruction. Written *hieroi logoi* do seem to have existed in many mysteries but they are virtually all lost.[25] The only text that gives us a specific idea of what they may have looked like is the well-known *PGurob* 1, an Orphic-Bacchic document of the third century BC, sadly consisting of just the ends of thirty lines from one column of an entire roll, and scraps of a second.[26] The surviving text presents a dense sequence of apparently brief prayers, sacrificial prescriptions, σύμβολα and ritual instructions that clearly presupposes first-hand knowledge of the actual procedures acquired through multiple exposure. It can in fact best be described as an aide-mémoire for someone already very familiar with both ritual and sense.[27] In the cult of Isis, there were numerous types of written text, including bi- or even tri-lingual liturgies, for specific occasions: at least in fiction, it could plausibly be suggested that the liturgy at the *ploiaphesia* or *Isidis navigium*, consisting mainly of prayers for the Princeps, Senate, *equites*, the entire Roman people, and all mariners, was read word for word in Latin by the presiding priest, while the remainder of the ritual was conducted in Greek.[28] The S. Prisca texts and the scraps from Dura-Europus, as well as the three σύμβολα cited by Firmicus Maternus, *De errore* 5.2; 19.1 and 20.1 (= Sanzi 2003, 432–34, Mithras nos. 19.1–3) do imply the existence at least in some mithraea of similar *hieroi logoi*; the crucial difference however is that in Mithraism there were no public rituals, and therefore no need to

[24] The definition of Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Springfield MA 1961) s.v.

[25] "Books were used in mysteries from an early date": Burkert 1987, 70, distinguishing three historically consecutive types: myth, nature allegory and metaphysics. I have already noted the Ptolemaic ordinances (n. 10 above).

[26] See the commentary by J. Gilbart Smyly, *Greek Papyri from Gurob* (Dublin and London 1921) 1–10 no. 1. The text is reproduced as Kern *OF* 101–04 frag.vet. 31 (which also gives the scraps from col. ii, omitted by Smyly) = DK 1 F 23. It is perfectly possible that *PGurob* 1 is an example of the kind of *hieros logos* required by the Ptolemaic ordinances.

[27] Cf. "Script culture remains highly oral in its use of language and texts": W.A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* (Cambridge 1987) 17.

[28] Apuleius, *Met.* 11.17, cf. Finkelpearl 1998, 53.

construct the appropriate ritual components. For the Phrygian cults, on the other hand, which had a plethora of public rituals, nothing similar survives, though Firmicus Maternus must surely have found the σύμβολα that he cites from the cult in some such text.[29]

Hieroi logoi however tell us nothing about instruction. In one of the passages of Apuleius, *Met.* 11 that most clearly seems to support the modern ironic reading of the book,[30] the Isiac priest Mithras takes out from a safe in the temple some books in hieroglyphic characters whose fantastic shapes are designed to prevent prying by the ignorant,[31] and reads out to Lucius what he is to do to prepare himself for initiation (11.22). The reader is thus clearly invited into a world of enchanted mumbo-jumbo. But so far from there being any reference to what we might understand by religious instruction, Lucius simply receives a list of (expensive) things he has to buy, presumably the robes he later wears and the food for the banquets; and later receives whispered instructions (*mandata*) from Mithras (the priest), which cannot be divulged, but, to judge from the word itself, are likely to have been specific ritual instructions.[32] What can be divulged to the reader relates to abstinence from wine and certain foods. If we disregard the 'Mithras-liturgy' and the supposed Berlin Mithraic catechism as too doubtful to use as evidence, as we surely must (see §5.b below), there is no other evidence for instruction in Mithraism. As for the cult of Cybele, Graillot (1912, 537) cites

[29] E.g. 18.1: ἐκ τυμπάνου βέβρωκα…; 22.1: θαρρεῖτε μύσται.…It must be admitted that Firmicus Maternus' information about the cult of Cybele and Attis was evidently very sketchy.

[30] Apart from Winkler 1985, see e.g. J.L. Penwill, *Ambages reciprocae*: Reviewing Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, *Ramus* 19 (1990) 1–25.

[31] *Litteris ignorabilibus praenotatos, partim figuris cuiusce modi animalium concepti sermonis compendiosa verba suggerentes, partim nodosis et in modum rotae tortuosis capreolatimque condensis apicibus a curiositate profanarum lectione munita*, "(books) inscribed with unknown characters. Some used the shapes of all sorts of animals to represent abridged expressions of liturgical language; in others, ends of the letters were knotted and curved like wheels or interwoven like vine-tendrils to protect their meaning from the curiosity of the uninitiated" (tr. J.A. Hanson).

[32] Cf. Plautus, *Capt.* 343; Livy 22.22.16; 40.24.4; Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.49.2 (all specific instructions). The best parallels I can find to the use of the word in a religious context (our passage is not listed in *TLL*; in the apparently promising passage Ovid, *Pont.* 2.2.121–4 Richmond *mandata* means 'request') are Ovid, *Fasti* 4.193f. *mandati memores* (Cybele to the Muses); *Met.* 8.809f. (an anonymous Oread communicates Ceres' instructions to *Fames*): *refert mandata deae*, cf. 821: *functaque mandato*; 14.829–31 (Hera to Hersilia via Iris); and some Christian texts, e.g. Tertullian, *De patient.* 15.2 Borleffs; Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 20.26, p. 749.12 Dombart-Kalb.

a passage from Augustine which he claimed might be evidence of some sort of instruction:

> *At enim illa omnia quae antiquitus de vita deorum moribusque conscripta sunt, longe aliter sunt intelligenda atque interpretanda sapientibus. Ita vero in templis populis congregatis recitari huiuscemodi salubres interpretationes heri et nudiustertius audivimus*.[33]
>
> Augustine, *Epist.* 91.5 (Migne, *PL* 33, col. 315)

However the continuation of the passage makes it clear that the reference is to the cult of Capitoline Jupiter and other 'mainstream' cults since it refers to all manner of recitations of myths, including epic, plays and other public performances.

The primary means whereby the lore of the mystery-component of the oriental cults was communicated seems to have been through direct participation in ritual.[34] That is certainly the impression given by Apuleius, *Met.* 11.19, 23–4 and 28. For what his evidence is worth, Firmicus Maternus likewise implies that σύμβολα were communicated for the first time in the course of rituals.[35] In the wider contexts of mystery-initiations, it is well-known that the words ὄργιον and ὄργια could be used concretely to mean 'sacred objects viewed at a moment of revelation' and thus as a synonym of σύμβολον or σύμβολα used of physical tokens rather than utterances.[36] The Eleusinian mysteries showed the initiate "simple things that at the same time had a profound significance".[37] Such pointers strongly suggest that, by contrast with the Christians, that there was little or no attempt to fix dogma or teaching as part of a struggle for control within the cult. It was this absence of

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[33] "All the old stories about the gods and their way of life have long since been reinterpreted, that is allegorised, by those with learning. In my young days, and even before, one could hear such revised interpretations being recited at temples when the people were assembled there."

[34] This process has been theorised by Bell 1992, 69–142; also the wider notion of 'performativity' developed by the gender theorist Judith Butler as "a regularized and constrained repetition of norms [which] enables the subject": *Bodies that Matter* (New York 1993) 95.

[35] *Habent enim propria signa, propria responsa, quae illis in istorum sacrilegiorum coetibus diaboli tradidit disciplina*, "(The pagans) have special pass-words and appropriate responses which the Devil's instruction has communicated to them in their sacrilegious assemblies": *De errore* 18.1.

[36] A. Henrichs, Die Maenaden von Milet, *ZPE* 4 (1969) 223–41 at 225–9; Parker and Σταματοπούλου 2004, 10f.

[37] Clinton 2007, 355. The 'simple things' included of course the return of a lost daughter to her mother, a goddess in suffering, joy that accompanies the appearance of grain, the grain that is Ploutos…

normative belief that ensured that there would be nothing resembling heresy; rather we should take it that there was a wide range of local and even individual variation. While we may allow that this afforded an agreeable flexibility that we should perhaps emulate in our studies of these matters, it does of course increase the danger of circularity when we attempt to specify the content of any given oriental cult.[38]

For all these reasons, we may take it that there was in fact a great variety of rituals in these religious movements, of which our sources give us hardly an inkling. Their basic dramaturgy owed something, but by no means everything, to the wider generative grammar of pagan festival; yet in many ways it was precisely their rituals that made them distinctive within the context of civic religious practice. The paradigmatic ritual of these cults was of course initiation, to which I now turn.

a. *Initiation*

τοῦτο δὴ ἐθέλον δηλοῦν τὸ τῶν μυστηρίων τῶνδε ἐπίταγμα, τὸ μὴ ἐκφέρειν εἰς μὴ μεμυημένους, ὡς οὐκ ἔκφερον ἐκεῖνο ὄν, ἀπεῖπε δηλοῦν πρὸς ἄλλον τὸ θεῖον, ὅτῳ μὴ καὶ αὐτῷ ἰδεῖν εὐτύχηται.[39]

Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.9.11, p. 187.1–4 Bréhier

καὶ πᾶσα τελετὴ πρὸς τὸν κόσμον ἡμᾶς καὶ πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς ξυνάπτειν ἐθέλει.[40]

Sallustius, περὶ θεῶν καὶ κόσμου 4.6, p. 7 Rochefort = p. 6 l. 25f. Nock

[38] The point nowadays hardly needs making, but we might cite, for example, Isidore's four Hymns to Isis from Medinet Madi in the Fayyum of early I^{a}, which are close to, but far from identical with, the tradition apparently emanating from Memphis (*SB* 8138–41 = *SEG* 8: 548–51. The best text, with French transl., is E. Bernand, *Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte gréco-romaine*. Annales litt. de l'Université de Besançon 98 [Paris 1969] 631–52 no. 175 = Totti nos. 21–24; cf. also the commentary, unfortunately in ignorance of Bernand's text, by Vera Vanderlip (Vanderlip 1972). We might also think of the Prayer of Cascelia, found together with a number of other extraneous (i.e. non-Mithraic) monuments in the mithraeum of the Castra Peregrinorum beneath S. Stefano Rotondo on the Caelian, though I personally see no reason to associate it with any identifiable cult: *AE* 1980: 51; G. Mussies, Cascelia's Prayer, in Bianchi and Vermaseren 1982, 156–67.

[39] "This is the intention of the command given in the mysteries here not to divulge (anything) to the uninitiated; (such a rule is proper, since) the divine can only divulge itself if one undertakes never to reveal it to someone who has not had the good fortune to behold it for himself."

[40] "Every initiation tends also to bring us closer to the kosmos and the gods."

> [Mystics] act as providers of evidence as to the truth of the supernatural for the body of believers that are not endowed with mystical capacity.
>
> R. Firth, *Essays on Social Organization and Values* (London 1964) 300

It is difficult to deal briefly with a complex topic so charged in antiquity with different symbolic meanings and connotations, and about which so much has been written in the modern period.[41] My account here is based squarely on my reading of Apuleius, Met. 11.19–30. As I have explained several times, I take these pages, although they ostensibly relate only to the cult of Isis, as an essentially trustworthy and in principle generalisable account of mystery initiation in the mid-second century AD.[42] From this perspective, initiation is to be seen as a rite of transition whose main feature was a fictive death and rebirth to a new life.[43] In so 'dying', the initiand is able to quit his real temporal existence and gain access to the mythical time of divinity. He is thus able to participate in the cosmogony and be united with the divine creator, the demiurge responsible for the order displayed by the cosmos. Rebirth involves becoming a new being, a metamorphosis that makes it possible for the initiand to enter into a new reality (Fick 1992), set in

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[41] See the bibliography assembled by A. Moreau in idem 1992b, 297–305.

[42] I thus accept the main lines of the commentary of J. Gwyn Griffiths (Griffiths 1975) and fully endorse the reading of Fick 1992.

[43] Eliade 1959, 12: "On comprend généralement par initiation un ensemble de rites et d'enseignements oraux qui poursuivent la modification radicale du status religieux et social du sujet à initier. Philosophiquement parlant, l'initiation équivaut à une mutation ontologique du régime existentiel" (the formulation is repeated in idem, L'initiation et le monde moderne, in Bleeker 1965, 1); cf. C.J. Bleeker, Some Introductory Remarks on the Significance of Initiation, in idem 1965, 14–20. Ries 1986c, 27: "Par l'initiation s'opère un passage, d'un état à un autre, d'un stade de vie à un stade nouveau, d'un genre de vie à un autre genre de vie. Ce passage se fait en vue de la réalisation d'un type de comportements qui seront des données essentielles dans la vie et dans l'existence de l'initié… Deux éléments semblent… essentiels: d'abord l'introduction dans une *communauté*, ensuite l'introduction dans une monde de *valeurs spirituelles en vie d'une vie ou d'une mission*". A good up-dating of A. Van Gennep's ideas can be found in N. Belmont, La notion du rite de passage, in Centilivres and Hinard 1986, 1–15. There are also a number of good articles on the topic in Bianchi 1986b, particularly: J.Y. Pentikäinen, Transition-rites, pp. 1–24; U. Bianchi, Some Observations on the Typology of 'Passage', pp. 45–61; N. Gasbarro, La grammatica dei riti di passagio, pp. 205–23. With P. Bourdieu, Les rites comme actes d'institution, in Centilivres and Hinard 1986, 206ff. = idem 2001, 175–86 (though he makes no mention of what Eliade had already said fifty years earlier), I would really prefer the term 'rites of institution'. Despite its title, Y. Dacosta, *Initiations et sociétés secrètes dans l'Antiquité gréco-romaine* (Paris 1991) is disappointing.

a new physical or imaginary realm, where he enters into communion with the divinity to whom he is bound, a communion that attests to the depth of his commitment. The ritual also imparts secret teaching about the 'true' order of the cosmos.[44] Thanks to this knowledge, whose value was increased by rule of non-divulgence,[45] the initiand is able to share in overcoming chaos, represented by the fictitious death.[46] All this seems to have involved a metaphorical journey from ignorance to 'full' knowledge, consisting in an ecstatic union with or vision of the deity. This journey could also be represented as tripartite, consisting of τὰ δρώμενα, the performance of the prescribed ritual, δεικνύμενα, viewing the sacred objects or symbols, and λεγόμενα, uttering the sacred responses, the σύμβολα (Henrichs 1998).

Initiation gave the adherents of these cults to understand that, though humans are subject to Destiny, they can evade it through the aid of a salvific deity. This was the main secret that might not be divulged. The socio-political élite had nothing against all this. The restriction of such supposed knowledge to a smallish group was to their advantage, since most people continued to believe in the force of Destiny, i.e. the way things are.[47] Moreover escaping from Destiny, especially on the conditions offered, was no major threat to public order. It was all a matter of understanding how the implicitly centrifugal tendencies of small private cults were to be recuperated. One example might be the way in which the *taurobolium/criobolium*, though ostensibly a foreign ritual, served as an expression of loyalty to the *domus divina*; another the

[44] On secrecy as a resort, cf. Giebel 1990; 13; Turcan 1992a, 225; S. Montiglio, *Silence in the Land of Logos* (Princeton 2000) 25; F. Graf, Confession, Secrecy and Ancient Societies, in Luchesi and von Stuckrad 2004, 259–71; Clinton 2007, 342–4.

[45] Pausanias relates that a man who had not been admitted to the ranks of καταβαίνοντες at the temple of Isis at Tithorea in Phthiotis nevertheless entered the ἄδυτον, saw the dead face to face, went back home, revealed what he had seen, and fell dead (10.32.17). Pausanias had heard a similar story about the temple of Isis at Coptos in Upper Egypt: in this case the man had allegedly been bribed by the Roman governor to penetrate the mystery, and he too is reported αὐτίκα τελευτῆσαι (ibid. 32.17)—a typical item of 'resistance' lore. On the early imperial 'voice oracle' at Coptos, see e.g. Apuleius, *Met.* 11.28: *per adyta Coptica*, with Frankfurter 1998, 150f., 156 etc.

[46] Eliade 1959, 17; cf. Brelich 1965 (an article that is fundamental to my view here); also R. Guénon, *Aperçus sur l'initiation* (Paris 1985). On Eliade's curious dependence on Frazer's notion of comparativism, note N. Spineto, Le comparatisme de Mircea Eliade, in Boespflug and Dunand 1997, 93–108.

[47] Cf. C. Weiss, *Deae fata nascentibus canunt*, in H. Froning, T. Hölscher and H. Mielsch (eds.), *Kotinos: Festschrift für Erika Simon* (Mainz 1992) 366–74.

patterning of certain Mithraic rituals on the model of the patron-client relationship.[48]

Initiation inaugurates a new life. The transition from one to another permits one to leave behind the negative aspects of one's previous life, and to make one's appearance as a new being beyond biological death. As far as the mysteries were concerned, as we saw in the fragment of Plutarch cited in Chap. 2.2 above, where τελευτᾶν is equated with τελεῖσθαι, 'true' death occurred so to speak at the moment of initiation (cf. Alvar 1993a, 132 and 139). This new being can be born thanks to a vision of another world that is the specific construction of the cult in question. There is no reason why this world should be opposed to the dominant values of its day, though of course it emphasises those values that are considered essential in pursuing the objectives set out, implicitly or explicitly, at initiation (Eliade 1959, 12). Nor need these values be identified with the sacral, since there is no reason to suppose that the promises of the mysteries were confined to well-being conceived in a purely religious framework.[49] As I have already stressed, the notion of σωτηρία was anchored in mundane, physical well-being. Indeed, as its symbolism indicates, initiation was often linked with the desire for children (Meslin 1985).

An important aspect of initiation is that it takes place away from everyday life.[50] To be accepted as true or effective, the metamorphosis has to be experienced in a strange, a different, place.[51] It may be considered to be located somewhere between the human and the divine. Access to it must be restricted. Only one who has been instructed by the mystagogue can enter the 'womb' where the change took place; and the catechumen can in his turn become a father who leads the next generation to the maternal 'womb'.[52] Given the extraordinary nature

[48] *Taurobolium*: Rutter 1968, 233–38, though see R. Sierra, Taurobolio y el culto imperial en la Galia Narbonense, in Alvar, Blánquez and Wagner 1995, 201–14; Mithraism: Gordon 2001b; 2007, 402f.

[49] This has been amply demonstrated for the cult of the Mater Magna by Sfameni Gasparro 1985; here I differ from Ries 1986c, 27.

[50] I am here following up some ideas on the location of initiation first suggested to me by reading Meslin 1986 and J.G. Simon, Initiation et espace sacré, in Ries 1986b, 107–27.

[51] Cf. C. Calame, Prairies intouchées et jardins d'Aphrodite: espaces 'initiatiques' en Grèce, in Moreau 1992b, 103–18.

[52] Meslin 1985 has argued for a close link between the location of initiation and the basic features of biological reproduction, suggested by the primeval or elemental imagery offered by Apuleius. Whether these associations were conscious to the minds of either mystagogues or initiands is another question. The imagery of fatherhood

of what takes places on this spot, it must be aesthetically effective so as to be able to give an impression of primordial chaos and terrifying darkness, 'cosmic night'. Primordial or mythical time also makes an appearance as part of the demiurgic process, marked off from real time by a sort of amnesia—symbolic death; and in this primordial time occur the journeys, 'to' the Underworld but also evidently 'to' heaven, we hear of in Apuleius:

> *accessi confinium mortis et, calcato Proserpinae limine, per omnia vectus elementa remeavi; nocte media vidi solem candido coruscantem lumine; deos inferos et deos superos accessi coram et adoravi de proximo.*[53]
>
> Apuleius, *Met.* 11.23

We might also think of the solar 'journeys' that Beck has argued were practised in Mithraism, mini-processions that took place in the artificial cave of the temple.[54] At the same time, the initiate must also return to this same locus as a new being, so that the staging had to be sufficiently adaptable to represent the light of the new life he or she has managed finally to attain.[55]

b. *Sacrifice*

> Blut ist ein besondrer Saft.
>
> Goethe, *Faust* I, l. 1740

> Wohin ist Gott, rief er, ich will es euch sagen!
> Wir haben ihn getödtet—ihr und ich!
> Wir Alle sind seine Mörder…Gott ist todt! Gott
> bleibt todt! Und wir haben ihn getödtet!
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*
> Buch 3, no. 125 (eds. Colli and Montinari, Berlin
> 1973, p. 158f.)

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seems to have been extensively employed only in the cult of Mithras, and to a much lesser extent in the cult of Isis. *Mater* is sometimes found as an honorific title for women who provided funds for *collegia*; but that is a completely different matter.

[53] "I came to the boundary of death and, having trodden the threshold of Proserpina, I travelled through all the elements and returned. In the middle of the night I saw the sun flashing with bright light. I came face to face with the gods below and the gods above and paid reverence to them from close at hand" (tr. J.A. Hanson).

[54] Beck 2000, 154–67 = 2004a, 64–77, but see §5.a below for some doubts.

[55] The language of the passage, like that of Plutarch frg. 178 Sandbach, perhaps suggests that much, perhaps all, was in the mind, so that very little in the way of staging may have been required, except for lighting, cf. A. Motte, Nuit et lumière dans les mystères d'Eleusis, in J. Ries and C.M. Ternes (eds.), *Symbolisme et expérience de la lumière dans les grandes religions: Actes du colloque de Luxembourg, 29–21 mars 1996*. Homo Religiosus, series 2, 1 (Turnhout 2002) 91–104.

> κύριε, τὰ χείλη μου ἀνοίξεις, καὶ τὸ στόμα μου
> ἀναγγελεῖ τὴν αἴνεσίν σου· ὅτι εἰ ἠθέλησας
> θυσίαν, ἔδωκα ἄν· ὁλοκαυτώματα οὐκ
> εὐδοκήσεις. θυσία τῷ θεῷ πνεῦμα
> συντετριμμένον, καρδίαν συντετριμμένην καὶ
> τεταπεινωμένην ὁ θεὸς οὐκ ἐξουδενώσει.
>
> Psalm 51 vv. 17–19 (Septuagint version)

One obtains divine favour by trying to please god, and there are few more expressive ways of doing that than offering something one needs oneself: food.[56] Even if the honorand neglects to bestow a return gift, the gods must be pleasured, since neither they nor their worshippers could see as clearly as Socrates the degree to which piety (ὁσιότης) is about making deals (ἐμπορικὴ τεχνή).[57] This is not the place for a general discussion of sacrifice, and I want simply to resume a few points of greatest importance for the oriental cults.[58] Sacrifice in these cults corresponded, albeit on a much reduced scale, to the wider practice we call sacrificial euergetism.[59] So far as we know, their sacrificial praxis

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[56] Porphyry, *De abstin*. 2.24 offers three reasons for sacrifice: to honour the gods, to return them thanks and to get from them some desired benefit (he omits divinatory sacrifice). Saloustios/Sallustius, Περὶ θεῶν καὶ κόσμου 16.1 notes that it is right and proper for us to offer the first fruits of what has been given to us to those who bestowed it in the first place: of our wealth we do this through making votives (δι' ἀναθαμάτων), of our bodies "by means of a lock of hair" (διὰ κόμης), of [our?] life "through sacrifices" (διὰ θυσιῶν). For a modern analysis, cf. C. Rivière, Approches comparatives du sacrifice, in Boespflug and Dunand 1997, 279–89.

[57] Plato, *Euthyphro* 14b–e, cited by Burkert 1996, 135. Nearly 800 years later Saloustios/Sallustius affirms that, since τὸ θεῖον in itself needs nothing from us, the honours we pay divinity are τῆς ἡμετέρας ὠφελείας ἕνεκα (Περὶ θεῶν καὶ κόσμου 15.1). Of course this line is common enough among philosophers, who were generally more in favour of ethical improvement than hecatombs: e.g. Cicero, *De nat. deor*. 2.71f. with Pease ad loc.; Philostratus, *Vit. Apollon*. 1.10f. The neo-Platonist and Egyptian priest Iamblichus elevates the tone still further by saying that we ought not to permit sacrifices either in honour of the gods, nor to give thanks, nor as votives, nor as first-fruits, since all these are vulgar misapprehensions. Nothing counts but the gods' absolute superiority and their role as transcendent causes of things (*De myster. aegypt.* 5.5–7). In this connection it is worth repeating that public sacrifices seem already to have ceased in most cities by the time Julian became emperor: Bradbury 1995; Stroumsa 2005, 105–43.

[58] In his introduction to Neusch c.1994, the editor stresses that there is far too much variety of practice to permit universalising definitions. The contributing authors express these differences each according to his epistemological and confessional inclination. As for social-anthropological views, we may highlight that of V.W. Turner, Sacrifice as Quintessential Process. Prophylaxis or Abandonment?, *History of Religion* 16 (1977) 189–215. J.H.M. Beattie, On understanding Sacrifice, in Bourdillon (and Fortes) 1979, 1–25 misguidedly excludes *a priori* all non-animal sacrifice.

[59] Cf. S. Pierce, Death, Revelry and *thysia*, *ClAnt* 12 (1993) 219–66; Schmitt Pantel 1999; P. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism*, tr. D. Sul-

owed nothing to their earlier developmental phases, though claims have been made to the contrary, particularly in relation to the *tauro-/criobolium*. The most important single fact is that, in common with Graeco-Roman civic sacrifice, praxis centred upon the altar as the point of communication with the other world.[60]

Civic sacrifice was understood as part of a complex of actions, with a grammar of its own, whose purpose was to render divinity propitious.[61] As Jean Rudhardt has stressed in the case of Greek sacrifice, its elements cannot be rigidly classified.[62] Nevertheless we can distinguish between different modalities, in the case of liquids, say, between libation and aspersion, when the latter is intended as an offering and not simply as a means of purification.[63] I certainly find it tempting to think in terms of the relationships set up by different actions: aspersion, for example, has a collective connotation, inasmuch as it links all those on whom the water falls, whereas libation simply establishes a relationship with the recipient, on the implicit assumption that it is up to the divinity to redistribute its beneficial effects.

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livan (New York and London 1990, orig. ed. 1976). T.D. McCreight, Sacrifical Ritual in Apuleius' Metamorphoses, in H. Hofmann (ed.), *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel* 5 (Groningen 1993) 31–61 makes an interesting attempt to integrate Apuleius' accounts of sacrifice into the wider Roman system. The role of the mysteries in the evolution of representations of sacrifice is over-simplified by Elsner 1995, 190–245: traditionally the gods were the recipients of sacrifice; Mithras performs one himself; whereas Christ is himself the victim. This account however ignores both the traditional Greek iconography of gods offering libation, the subject of a well-known debate in Germany, and the equally traditional role of Nike/Victoria as bull-sacrificer, which is directly relevant to the case of Mithras.

[60] J.-L. Durand, Bêtes grecques, in Detienne and Vernant 1979, 133–81 at 139.

[61] Cf. H. Foley, *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides* (Ithaca and London 1986) 24–39; J.-P. Vernant, A General Theory of Sacrifice and the Slaying of the Victim in the Greek *thysia*, in idem, *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (F.I. Zeitlin, ed.) (Princeton 1991) 290–302.

[62] Rudhardt 1958, 213. The terms θυσία and σπονδή have been analysed by J. Casaubon, *Recherches sur le vocabulaire des sacrifices en grec des origines à la fin de l'époque classique* (Aix-en-Provence 1966) 126–39 and 256. In his view the first denotes any consecrated offering, animal or vegetable, some of which is destroyed and the remainder consumed; the second is a general term applicable to any libation, irrespective of the nature of the liquid involved, the circumstances and the recipient.

[63] Cf. Stengel 1910, 34–39; 1920, 103–05; Eitrem 1915, 76–83. J. Maisonneuve, *Les rituels*. Que sais-je? 2425 (Paris 1988) 30 distinguishes between ablution, confession and penitence, inversion and expulsion as sub-categories of purificatory rites, whose purpose is to avoid the negative consequences of contact with impurity.

The Greeks and Romans saw no qualitative difference between animal and vegetable offerings, even though in principle they might have been understood as two separate expressive systems (of course this did not apply to other forms of differentiation such as methods of cooking).[64] As L. Ziehen put it:

> Sicher aber ist, daß die unblutigen Opfer während des ganzen Altertums eine hervorragende Stellung behaupteten, nicht nur weil sie zu den ältesten Opfern gehörten und durch diese Tradition geschützt waren, sondern vor allem deshalb, weil die vegetarische Nahrung selbst bei den Griechen und Römern, wie übrigens schließlich auch heute noch, vorherrschend blieb.[65]

As for animal-sacrifice, while votives might well be private affairs, in general sacrifice and libation had a social dimension. Even 'private' sacrifices were generally undertaken within the family context. More leeway was available in the case of oracular consultations, for example at consultations of the oracle of Trophonius in Boeotia, conspiracy, or

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[64] The Paris School has always tended to neglect the existence of vegetable offerings, e.g. J.-L. Durand, Sacrificare, dividere, ripartire, in Grottanelli and Parise 1988, 193: "Il sacrificio.… consiste nell' uccidere un animale, secondo certe procedure adeguate, per mangiarlo". Yet, as everyone knows, Theophrastus believed that they were the original type of offering, just as humans were originally vegetarian (Porphyry, *De abstin.* 2.5.2), cf. G. Bodei Giglioni, Come gli uomini devennero malvagi: sviluppo della civiltà, alimentazione e sacrificio in Teofrasto, *RSI* 103 (1991) 5–32 (though her particular argument, that these ideas are not Theophrastan, is quite unconvincing); Bouffartigue and Patillon 1979, 67–71. The importance of bloodless offerings in Greek offering praxis was explored already by C.A. Lobeck, *De Graecorum placentis sacris* (Königsberg 1818); and 1829, 1050–85 (the famous 'Pemmatologia sacra'), 1082–85; and they received considerable attention in the work of the 'philological' school: O. Band, Das Attische Demeter-Kore-Fest der Epikleidia, *Programm der Margarethenschule Berlin* (Berlin 1887) 4ff.; G. Hock, *Griechische Weihegebräuche* (Diss. München 1904) (Würzburg 1905); Stengel 1910, 7f., 66–72, 130–32; Wyss 1914; Eitrem 1915, 261–80 (I exclude the discussion of salt); C. Mayer, *Das Öl im Kultus der Griechen* (Diss. Würzburg 1917); Stengel 1920, 98–103.

[65] L. Ziehen, s.v. Opfer, *RE* 18 (1939) 579–627 at 582; the idea is repeated from O. Kern, *Die Religion der Griechen* (Berlin 1926–38) 1: 156f., who cites the female figure offering fruits and wine as part of the bull-sacrifice on one of the long sides of the Poros-stone Late-Minoan III sarcophagus from the chamber-tomb near the palace of Haghia Triada (c. 1400 BC); cf. S. Marinatos, *Crete and Mycenae* (London 1960) 151f. with the colour photo pl. XXVIII (facing p. 66); M.P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion*.[2] Skrifter utgivna av kungl. humanistiska vetenskapsamfundet i Lund 9 (Lund 1950) 426–443 at 432f.; a b/w photo in Nilsson, *GGR* 1, pl. 10.1. Cf. Kirk 1981, 77: "One of the remarkable facts about Greek divine cult in the late Bronze Age is that…burnt animal sacrifices were comparatively rare, and the regular means of worship was through libation and the presentation of vegetable substances (cereals, honey and the like), on stone 'tables of offering'".

magical practice, though in no case should we lose sight of the link with private, and in some cases even public practice.[66]

It used to be an article of faith that official or public Graeco-Roman religion afforded no opportunity for profound religious emotion comparable to that of the mystery-component of the oriental cults (or for that matter Christianity—usually the implied comparandum). It is now routinely accepted that there was a place in all of them both for the magical-comminatory and the submissive-religious mode.[67] But my main interest here is to emphasise that religious feelings can be manifested in all kinds of ways, not necessarily hidden away inside the individual; and that any public ritual, perhaps even especially rituals organised by

[66] Cf. Malaise 1986a, 92. Trophonius: P. Bonnechere, *Trophonius de Lébadée: cultes et mythe d'une cité béotienne.* RGRW 150 (Leyden 2000); oath: Lollianos, *Phoinikika* B1 recto et verso: A. Henrichs, Lollianos, *Phoinikika*: Fragmenta eines neuen Romans, *ZPE* 4 (1969) 205–15 at 206f. = idem, *Die Phoinikika des Lollianos*. Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen 14 (Bonn 1972); idem, Human Sacrifice in Greek religion, in Rudhardt and Reverdin 1981, 195–235 at 228f., but the interpretation of G.N. Sandy, Notes on Lollianus' *Phoenicica*, *AJPh* 100.3 (1979) 367–76 is to be preferred to Henrichs' 'Mysterienroman' theory; magic: of many texts, Horace, *Epode* 5 with the commentary by L.C. Watson, *A Commentary on Horace's Epodes* (Oxford 2003) 174–250.

[67] Some people are still inclined to believe that depth of religiosity is correlated with social complexity. Let me here reiterate my conviction that a variety of religious expressions can co-exist in complementary fashion, whether or not those higher up in the social order persist in thinking that they are incompatible. I do not here wish to enter into the discussion on the relative religiosity of those who live in states and in acephalous or non-state societies. Elsewhere in this book I have argued that religion is best thought of as closely connected to the existence of the state; here I want to stress that elevated forms of religiosity can also be found in acephalous societies (cf. p. 208). I find it odd that it is usually those who claim that religion is consubstantial with humanity who also believe that 'primitives' have no access to ethical-spiritual experience, as though such experience passes in a single leap from a few primitive forms to truly complex spirituality. All this is simply the precipitate of nineteenth-century evolutionary thinking. It is still to be found in the work of someone like A. Cahn, Le sacrifice dans l'hindouisme, in Neusch c. 1994, 201, who understands the shift from comminatory to submissive sacrifice as one from a magico-ritual level to an ethical-spiritual one, as though it were obvious that the one must necessarily be later than the other, and, of course, higher in the grand scheme of things. I believe in their possible co-existence, since ritualisation is no less a feature of the supposed second (ethical-spiritual) level than of the first, and both ethics and spirituality can attain the same quality in the supposed 'magico-religious' phase as in the 'ethico-spiritual' one. Given my rejection of evolutionism, it will be obvious why I prefer the notion of mode, as in the main text. It has the additional advantage of being easier to accept for those who do not hold that most divine-human relations are a result of institutionalised religion. On all this, I do urge the reader, even if he or she wants nothing to do with biologism, to look at Burkert 1996; also idem, Ritual between Ethology and Post-Modern Aspects: Philological-historical Notes, in Stavrianopoulou 2006, 23–36.

the collectivity, can arouse deep religious feelings even though that is not their main intention.

With Marcel Mauss, I would thus argue that sacrifice involves the idea that material and (supposed) spiritual energy can be transformed through ritual into a concrete, apprehensible physical benefit. In order to avoid any direct contact between sacrificant and deity, such transformation requires a mediator, who must afterwards disappear.[68] At any rate, whatever the precise nature of sacrifice, its functions can be analytically distinguished (though not, generally speaking, by the actors) as apotropaic, purificatory, propitiatory and regenerative. In the course of human history only a few societies have developed the ideological conditions necessary to construct a regular theory of sacrifice.[69] One example would be Theophrastus' argument in Περὶ εὐσεβείας that true sacrifice consists solely of vegetable offerings, which derive from our common mother, the earth: only then, and only on condition that they are offered in the right frame of mind, shall we be considered worthy, at the end of our lives, to behold τὸ σύμπαν γένος τῶν ἐν οὐρανῷ θεῶν.[70] The reward for correct sacrificial practice is thus projected into the next world. Only once this step has been taken, can the direct link between offering and return be broken. And only then can the focus be upon the qualitative value of the offering rather than the quantitative.

In Chapter 2, I suggested that the ancient world had arrived a precisely such a stage at the time the oriental cults reached their apogee during the second century AD. That was my reason for arguing in Chapter 3 that we can properly speak of their systems of values. The alteration in the significance of sacrifice is a symptom of a paradigm-shift with regard to the conceptualisation of the relation between the divine world and this. I see this shift as dialectically related to the cults'

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[68] H. Hubert and M. Mauss, *Sacrifice: its Nature and Function.* Tr. W.D. Hall (London 1964, orig. ed. 1899); cf. M. Mauss, Essai sur le sacrifice, in *Oeuvres* I (C. Lévi-Strauss, ed.) (Paris 1968). Mauss, as a good Durkheimian, argued that sacrifice is a medium whereby the profane communicates with the sacred via a victim, i.e. something consecrated, that is destroyed in the course of the ceremony, so as to avoid any direct contact with the sacred.

[69] I do not count the Hesiodic myth of Pandora as a theory in the required sense, cf. Csapo 2005, 251–62. The most elaborate traditional theory of sacrifice must be the Mimamsa Brahmin theory of *apurva*.

[70] Porphyry, *De abstin.* 2.32.1f., cf. Bouffartigue and Patillon 1979, 17–29, 51–58; D. Obbink, The Origin of Greek Sacrifice. Theophrastus on Religion and Cultural History, in W. Fortenbaugh and R.W. Sharples (eds.), *Theophrastean Studies. On Natural Science, Physics, and Metaphysics, Ethics, Religion and Rhetoric*. Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities 3 (New Brunswick 1988) 272–95.

morality: it made the new moral perceptions more attractive, and was in turn fostered by them.[71]

I take the absence of documentation that could decisively resolve such issues as an indication that the religious field was indeed in the course of a transition of the sort I have tried to outline in this discussion of sacrifice.[72] However, as I have said before, I do also acknowledge that the sacrificial régime continued to maintain the existence of a 'magical' relationship between the community and the victim, which legitimated the consumption of the latter. From that point of view red meat and fat surely remained important. But the most charged element in this symbolic universe was surely not the meat but blood, that special 'juice' that was recognised by sacrificants as being able to circulate the desires and wishes of mankind into the other world and out of it again. And, in our special case, blood bundled purificatory power, regeneration, physical and moral strength, everything in fact that one required for initiation. For in that rite, more than in any other, life and death, material existence and spiritual ardour, cosmic regeneration and personal immortality were fused inextricably together.[73]

c. *Commensality*

οὐ γὰρ ἄτερ σοῦ
εἰλαπίναι θνητοῖσιν ἵν' οὐ πρώτῃ πυμάτῃ τε
Ἑστίῃ ἀρχόμενος σπένδει μελιηδέα οἶνον.
Hymn. Hom. 29 to Hestia, ll. 4–6 Allen

Man amüsierte sich göttlich in [den] Tempeln, bei [den] Festspielen, Mysterien; da schmückte man das Haus mit Blumen, da gab es feierlich holde Tänze, da lagerte man sich zu freudigen Mahlen … wo nicht gar zu noch süßeren Genüssen.
H. Heine, *Elementargeister* (1835–7) = *Sämtliche Schriften* (ed. K. Briegleb) (Munich 1996[3]) 3: 685.

[71] Cf. now the complementary arguments of Stroumsa 2005, 105–44.

[72] Cf. D. Frankfurter, On Sacrifice and its Residues: Processing the Potent Body, in Luchesi and von Stuckrad 2004, 511–53, arguing for a view of sacrifice that acknowledges the reality of what passes in ritual from the other world into this one.

[73] On blood, see still the extraordinary chapter by Eitrem 1915, 416–60; the second paragraph begins wonderfully: "Es gibt noch Völker, die frisches Menschenblut als Nahrungsmittel … genießen"; on blood in the cult of the Mater Magna, cf. Sfameni Gasparro 1983. Kirk 1981, 52f. is rightly sceptical of the idea of the identity of sacrificant and victim, which sustains so much modern theorizing about sacrifice.

Once the libations have been poured and the victim sacrificed, the banquet is prepared by the cooks. A Christian like Clement of Alexandria could claim that sacrifice was invented as an excuse to eat meat: σαρκοφαγιῶν δ' οἶμαι προφάσει αἱ θυσίαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐπινενόηνται (*Stromateis* 7.6.32 = III, p. 24.16f. Stählin). Such a claim is absurd, as Clement himself half-admits, since it would imply that all meat eaten in antiquity was sacrificial, that only meat was sacrificed, and that sacrifices invariably ended in a meal. None of these propositions is true: meat from hunting is an obvious exception to the first claim, as are holocaust or naval sacrifices to the third (though holocaust sacrifices are uncommon and limited to small animals such as piglets). Nevertheless a feast involving the consumption of meat often was the final act in the sacrificial process, as we can see from the numerous representations on red-figure vases of Herakles roasting σπλάγχνα on long spits, in preparation for *la grande bouffe*.[74] On the other hand, access to such feasts was usually restricted: although, as I have mentioned, the Archaic and Classical stoa was developed in order to provide shelter for large public banquets, and Hellenistic and Roman euergetes and foundations did sometimes finance similar occasions,[75] in the normal run of things only the priests and sacrificants, i.e. those who paid for the victim(s), and their families, were admitted to the god's table.[76] As a result, at least in Athens, there appears to have been a certain resentment of the lavishness of such private banquets.[77]

The sacralisation of the feast is hardly to be wondered at since food provides the energy required to live. However, the process can also been seen as one aspect of the wider regularisation of sacrifices

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[74] Cf. Rudhardt 1958, 158; J.-P. Vernant, À la table des hommes, in Detienne and Vernant 1979, 37–132 esp. 43–45; A. Motte, Le symbolisme des repas sacrés en Grèce, in Ries 1985, 157–71. Herakles σπλαγχνόπτης (a theme entirely missing from F. Brommer's various collections): G. Rizza, Una nuova pelikè a figure rosse e lo "splanchnoptes" di Styppax, *Annuario della scuola Archaeologica di Atene* 37–38 (1959–60) 321–45.

[75] G. Kuhn, Untersuchungen zur Funktion der Säulenhalle in archäischer und klassischer Zeit, *JdAI* 100 (1985) 169–317; Schmitt Pantel 1999; also earlier, e.g. Nikostratos son of Dieitrephes, several times general between 427–18 BC: cf. Aristophanes, *Wasps* 82 with D.M. MacDowell ad loc.; idem, Nikostratos, *CQ* n.s. 15 (1965) 41–51 esp. 48–50.

[76] Mylonopoulos 2006, 79–83; K. Dunbabin, *Ut graeco more biberetur*: Greeks and Romans on the Dining-Couch, in Nielsen 1998, 81–101 at 82–89.

[77] As a comic *topos*, cf. Pherecrates, *Automoloi* frg. 23 K = 28 Kassel-Austin (vol. 7, p. 118); Menander, *Dysc*. 447–54 with E.W. Handley ad loc. (p. 214); also Aristotle, *EN* 1160a19: ἔνιαι δὲ τῶν κοινωνιῶν δι' ἡδονὴν δοκοῦσι γίγνεσθαι, θιασωτῶν καὶ ἐρανιστῶν (perhaps merely descriptive, but see G. Ramsauer ad loc., p. 546).

and libations so as to form an annual ritual calendar that orchestrates, explicitly or implicitly, the more important festivals of the *polis* (whether Greek or Roman) and its sub-divisions. Being private institutions (if we exclude the *Megalensia*), the oriental cults had only an indirect relation to the public sphere: their proper *Sitz im Leben* was the group of adherents.[78] Nevertheless they did have a public dimension (expressed for example in the *Isidis navigium*), a dimension that increased as they became socially more integrated into the ideological apparatus of the state, culminating in rituals and votives specifically intended to uphold the public welfare, particularly of the emperor. From that perspective, their rituals, sacrifices and banquets had implications at the level of the individual, the group and the state as a whole.

We cannot decide for certain whether the ritual banquet was a recent innovation in the mysteries or in some sense 'original'. But there is some archaeological evidence in favour of the assumption that it was an early feature of these cults as they spread into the Mediterranean. Serapeum A at Delos for example, which was built c. 240 BC, has a dining-room of c. 40 m^2 next door to the temple, which would be enough to entertain a small number of people (either because there were no more in the group or because not everyone attended at the same time). Maiistas, the temple-aretalogist, describes the ensemble in his foundation-narrative:

σέθεν θ' ἅμα βουλομένοιο
ῥηϊδίως καὶ νειὸς ἀέξετο καὶ θυόεντες
βωμοὶ καὶ τέμενος, τετέλεστο δὲ πάντα μελάθρωι
ἕδρανά τε κλισμοί τε θεοκλήτους ἐπὶ δαῖτας…[79]
IG XI.4, 1299 = Totti no. 11 = *RICIS* 202/0101 ll. 62–65

The expression θεοκλήτους ἐπὶ δαῖτας surely indicates the sacral, perhaps even sacramental, character of these feasts.[80] Many invitations to such Serapis-banquets have been found on ancient rubbish-dumps

[78] Bleeker 1963, 233–35 draws up a scheme of four types of sacral meal, the last of which corresponds to my initiatory meal, which he treats as a sub-type of 'communion'.

[79] "Because you (i.e. Serapis) willed it so, the temple, and the incense-burning altars and the entire *temenos* were built with ease, and all the seats and couches were constructed in the big hall for the banquets to which the god summons (his followers)."

[80] Cf. Engelmann 1975, 42f.; MacMullen 1981, 37–48. Despite its merits, I think that Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2000, 300–29, in treating temple, *collegium*, synagogue, mystery and funerary meals together, fails to make the appropriate distinctions between different types of meals, and seems to believe they all had the same value.

in Egypt, particularly at Oxyrhynchus; Tertullian, hyperbolic as ever, claims the cooking will be so lavish, and cause so much smoke, that the fire-brigade may have to be called (*spartioli excitabuntur*).[81] We can certainly say that such meals were usual in all three of these cults: the common meal is one of the most effective means of integrating the members of a community and creating feelings of solidarity, thus providing a significant contrast to the world outside; it is also a central focus of funerary celebrations.[82] The mithraeum is indeed a perfect exemplification of this aim, with its podia, in the form of extended *klinai*, running down each side of the building, and the tauroctony, the god performing his sacrifice, on the back wall.

What of the symbolism of these meals? The debate has been between those who think that they did contain at least an element of Catholic 'communion', such that the participants partook of the divinity when eating the meal, and those who reject any such interpretation and claim that sacred banquets in the mysteries were no different from any other post-sacrificial meals, or even funerary banquets, in antiquity.[83] It seems to me, once again, that the dispute, at any rate in this form, cannot be resolved: there is so little direct information that *a priori* assumptions crowd in almost from the beginning, so that it is almost impossible to

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[81] Invitations: Totti 1985, 125–27 lists 16 examples under her no. 48; also T.C. Skeat, Another Dinner-Invitation from Oxyrhynchus (*P.Lond. inv*. 3078, *JEA* 61 (1975) 251–54 at 253 n. 2 (not all to the Sarapis-*kline* however). Add *P.Coll. Youtie* I. 51–52; *POxy* 4339 and 4540 (both with useful commentary); and see still H.C. Youtie, The 'Kline' of Sarapis, *HThR* 41 (1948) 9–29 = idem, *Scriptiunculae* 1 (Amsterdam 1973) 487–507 (on the interesting letter *P.Mich* inv. 4686 from Karanis, III^{p} = Totti 128f. no. 49, which contains the memorable phrase καὶ γὰρ ἀντιπῖν ἄνθρωπος οὐ δύναται τῷ κυρίῳ Σαράπιδι, l. 15f.). Invitation to the '*kline* of Anubis' in a temple of Sarapis (late III^{p}), possibly a funerary meal: *SB* 14503 = D. Monserrat, The *kline* of Anubis, *JEA* 78 (1992) 301–07. Fire-brigade: Tertullian, *Apolog.* 39.15. This may not be quite as far-fetched as it seems: Ptolemaios in *P.Mich* inv. 4686 had to provide five ass-loads of wood for the feast.

[82] This has become something of a topos recently, cf. K. Dunbabin, Convivial Spaces: Dining and Entertainment in the Roman Villa, *JRA* 9 (1996) 66–80; eadem, *The Roman Banquet: Images of Conviviality* (Cambridge 2003); the essays in Nielsen 1998; Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2000, 272–329. Defunctive commensality: M. Heinzelmann, *Die Nekropolen von Ostia: Untersuchungen zu den Gräberstraßen vor der Porta Romana und an der Via Laurentina* (Munich 2000); S. Stehmeier, Gemeinschaft über den Tod hinaus. Grabtriklinien als Festplätze römische-kaiserzeitlicher Collegia, in Nielsen 2006, 215–24.

[83] Cybele seems to have been considered to be present at funerary banquets in Asia Minor, with the dead person in a sense being presented to her: E. Mitropoulou, The Goddess Cybele in Funerary Banquets and with an Equestrian Hero, in Lane 1996, 135–165.

adjudicate 'objectively'.[84] Since the cult-meal was a cultural reality, over time it gradually acquired more elaborate features, just as it did in Christianity. We might say that the sacred banquet had both a pagan and a Christian form, and the decision as to which is to take precedence is largely a matter of the scholar's subjective choice.

Seen in a functional light, the sacred banquet is important because of the different levels at which it can be seen to contribute to group cohesion.[85] Performatively, it turns aspects of the mythical account of the natural cycle into action and direct speech, for greater immediacy of comprehension. Symbolically, it links the acceptance of death to the continuance of life, thus representing human life, and death, as a special case of a universal rhythm (cf. Rudhardt 1958, 60). The site where the ritual is celebrated is also of central importance, since it establishes links between locus, symposiast and deity. Mithraea are again an excellent illustration, since, at any rate ideally, they systematically reproduced the set of ideas through which the individual initiate could relate to the god's example, which in this case itself included a sacral banquet together with Helios/Sol. None of this is peculiar to the mysteries, since comparable banquets are found all over the world (Bleeker 1963, 228), but, given the ideological biases of the comparative method, it seems preferable to examine each variant for itself.

d. *Prayer*

> *'Isi, Paraetonium Mareoticaque arva Pharonque*
> *quae colis et septem digestum in cornua Nilum,*
> *fer, precor,' inquit 'opem nostroque medere timori!*
> *te, dea, te quondam tuaque haec insignia vidi*
> *cunctaque cognovi, sonitum, comitesque facesque…'*
>
> Ovid, *Metam.* 9.773–77

Prayer is one of the least noticed, because most highly routinised, every-day activities. Though it may seem to be of minor importance,

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[84] See also my remarks on the relation between Christianity and the mysteries in Chap. 5.

[85] Rudhardt 1958, 160; Bleeker 1963, 227. I would want to add that the ritual also expresses the internal hierarchy of the group: in performing his proper function, each member implicitly assents to the division of labour and the hierarchy of value associated with it, cf. J. Rüpke, Organisationsmuster Rom, in Bonnet, Rüpke and Scarpi 2006, 13–26 at 24f. (on the Torre Nova Bacchic inscription). However Rüpke draws rather sweeping conclusions from a single inscription that makes no pretence of being more than a snapshot of the cult at a moment in time.

it should in fact interest anyone trying to understand how ancient religion functioned (Versnel 1981a). Written texts are here crucial; fortunately we dispose of a good deal of information, from literary and epigraphic sources, on ancient practice. We thus have an insight into the type of appeals made to the gods in a variety of situations, mainly of course requests, for blessing, for prosperity, health, for divine help and intervention as in the passage of Ovid cited in the epigraph, but also philosophical 'hymns', and a range of evocations, conjurations and curses.[86]

The Romans themselves evidently devoted some thought to the issue of prayer. Pliny the Elder, for example, provides a brief functional typology in the context of the question whether language has an inherent power (*polleantne aliquid verba et incantamenta carminum*).[87] He first mentions prayer in the context of sacrifice: sacrifice without prayer *non videtur referre*, just as divination (extispicy) without prayer seems to be valueless. He then distinguishes three sub-types of public or official utterance (*obsecratio*), which he rather clumsily terms *impetritae*, *depulsoriae* and *commentationes* or *commendationes* (Pliny, *HN* 28.11). The first are invocations to obtain favour from the gods, in particular favourable omens, but perhaps also evocations and conjurations; the second are *deprecationes*, i.e. prayers to avert evil. The third category requires a little further discussion because the text seems to be corrupt. Most mss. read *commentationis* (V, R, d, v); one reads *commentationes* (E); *commendationis* is

[86] There are three good older works: C. Ausfeld, De Graecorum precationibus quaestiones, *Jb. klass. Philol., Suppl.* 28 (1903) 506–47 (also separately, Leipzig 1903); Appel 1909; P.J.T. Beckmann, *Das Gebet bei Homer* (Diss. Würzburg 1932); more recently, note E. von Severus, s.v. Gebet, I, *RfAC* 8 (1972) 1134–1258; O. Michel and Th. Krauser, Gebet, II (Fürbitte), ibid. 9 (1976) 1–36; Limet and Ries 1980; D. Aubriot-Sévin, *Prières et conceptions religieuses en Grèce ancienne jusqu'à la fin du V^e siècle*. Coll. Maison de l'Orient méditerranéen (Lyons 1992); F.V. Hickson, *Roman Prayer Language: Livy and the Aeneid of Vergil* (Stuttgart 1992); S. Pulleyn, *Prayer in Greek Religion* (Oxford 1997); Kiley 1997; C. Guittard, Invocations et structures théologiques dans là prière à Rome, *REL* 76 (1998) 71–92; W.D. Furley and J.M. Bremer, *Greek Hymns*. 2 vols (Stuttgart 2001); J.C. Thom, *Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus: Text, Transl. and Comm.* (Stuttgart 2005); G. Zuntz, *Griechische Philosophische Hymnen* (Tübingen 2005); F. Graf, Prayer in Magic and Religious Ritual, in C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera* (New York 1991) 188–213. An anthology of early Christian prayer: A. Hamman, *La prière dans l'Église ancienne* (Berne 1989).

[87] C. Guittard, Pline et la classification des prières dans la religion romaine (*NH* 28.10–21), *Helmantica* 38 (1987) 157–80; idem, *Recherches sur le* carmen *et la prière dans la Littérature latine et la religion romaine* (Paris 1996).

H. Barbarus' suggestion (1492).[88] Before 1972, most specialists in Roman religion opted for Barbarus' emendation as more appropriate to the idea of prayer (Köves-Zulauf 1972, 38 n. 35). In that year, however, T. Köves-Zulauf, in the most detailed examination of this passage ever undertaken, argued strongly on 'structural' grounds in favour of the mss. reading, interpreting it as a quite different type of official utterance, the (augural or haruspical) interpretation of a sign.[89]

In his review of Köves-Zulauf, Jerzy Linderski rightly argued, as Barbarus and many others had done before him, that a text of Valerius Maximus supports the conjecture *commendationis* by showing that the latter was indeed a type of *precatio*, as Pliny's text implies:

> *Prisco etiam instituto rebus divinis opera datur, cum aliquid commendandum est, precatione, cum exposcendum, voto, cum solvendum, gratulatione, cum inquirendum vel extis vel sortibus, impetrito, cum sollemni ritu peragendum, sacrificio, quo etiam ostentorum ac fulgurum denuntiationes procurantur.*[90]
>
> Valerius Maximus, *Mem.* 1.1.1a, ed. Combès

Since the previous sentence also alludes to the *portentorum dupulsiones*, the ritual aversion of portents, Valerius Maximus seems to have been familiar with the same principle of division as Pliny, even though he puts the elements in the order *depulsiones-commendandum-impetritum*.[91] We may therefore take it that Pliny's third form of *precatio* was the

[88] L. Jan in 1858 suggested reading *commendatoriis*, but no one has followed him (cf. Mayhoff, ed.min. ad loc.).

[89] Köves-Zulauf 1972, 34–63. Of Köves-Zulauf's reviewers, J. André, *Latomus* 33 (1974) 195f. accepts the 'structuralist' method and *commentatio* without demur; R.M. Ogilvie, *CR* 26 (1976) 283f. seems to accept *commentatio* but disagrees about its significance; J. Poucet, *AC* 43 (1974) 483–86 accepts *commentatio* and praises the learning, but objects to the 'structuralist' method. Otherwise, the book seems to have evoked more dismay than interest: it was never reviewed in *Gnomon*, *REL*, *RHR* or *JRS*.

[90] "Ancient rules also regulated the conduct of ritual: prayer, when it was a matter of putting something into the gods' care; the votive undertaking, when it was a matter of asking for something and thanksgiving when it came to redeeming the vow; asking for good omens when it was a matter consulting the gods by means of the entrails or lots; sacrifice when it was a matter of regular worship—sacrifice was also used in cases when it was necessary to expiate portents and lightning-strikes."

[91] J. Linderski, *ClPhil* 70 (1975) 284–89. Linderski cites a number of parallel texts for the idea of 'putting something into the gods' care', e.g. Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 4.8 (the crops entrusted to Segetia); 4.21 (nurslings to Ops, and a whole list of others), Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.23 (Poppaea's unborn child to the gods); Apuleius, *Met.* 3.7 (a plight to the gods), etc. and plausibly links this religious usage to imperial *commendatio* to an office.

commendation or entrusting of somebody or something to the care of the gods.[92]

It seems probable that there were other more complex Roman divisions of prayer-forms than this, which may for example have been discussed in the books *de pontificibus* and *de auguribus* of Varro's *De rerum divinarum*, and perhaps also in the almost wholly obscure Book 11 (*de consecrationibus*).[93] From the surviving material, we certainly distinguish a wider range of utterances, or texts, that can loosely be thought of as prayers: invocations, supplications, hymns, vows and votives, aretalogies, oaths, a range of performatives such as purifications, 'judicial prayers' and regular imprecations or curses (Versnel 1981a, 17–26). However these three types (or four, including prayer at sacrifice) may be taken as those prayer-types that would most naturally have occurred to a Roman.

Pliny's list reminds us of the obvious point that many private and public acts in the Roman world were ritualised, thus requiring divine approval. Such a close and repeated relation to the gods is obviously incompatible with the old idea (which one still comes across in New Testament circles, for example) that the population of the Empire was largely dissatisfied with their religion. Quite apart from the evidence for enthusiastic participation in civic festivals and sacrifice, there was a widespread individual religiosity that is everywhere evident in the literature, as well as the epigraphy, of the Empire.[94] Alongside this diffused religiosity, however, there was a very vocal level of philosophical criticism of popular religious practice, represented for example by the Cynics, the Epicureans and the Academics. Scholars have in the past paid far too much attention to this discourse, simply because it is easily available in the form of argumentative texts. Historians have tended to ignore popular religious culture for another reason, being all too interested in the theological justification of empire, for which there is of course a great deal of fascinating material.[95] The traditional

[92] Pliny remarks on the emperor Tiberius' approval of offering good wishes when someone sneezed (28.23).

[93] E. Norden, *Aus altrömischen Priesterbüchern*. Skrifter utgivna av kungl. humanistiska vetenskapssamfundet i Lund 29 (Lund and Leipzig 1939) 4–6. Cardauns lists just two frags. from *de consecr*., his nos. 83f.

[94] Cf. Versnel 1981a, 26–33; Veyne 1989; 1999.

[95] Cf. e.g. J. Rufus Fears, *Princeps a diis electus: The Divine Election of the Emperor as a Political Concept at Rome*. Monogr. of the American Academy at Rome 26 (Rome 1977); idem, The Cult of Jupiter and Roman Imperial Ideology, *ANRW* II.17.1 (1981) 3–141; idem, The Theology of Victory at Rome: Approaches and Problems, *ANRW* II.17.2

Roman religious system, that is the *sacra publica*, supplemented by all that is implied by *mos maiorum*, being essentially the religion of the élite, did not need to be validated or legitimated by the mass of the population. It is now agreed that the (expanding) Roman élite, whether or not individuals had access to the philosophical critique of civic and popular religion, continued to subscribe to the performance of the post-Augustan *sacra publica* at Rome and, in a modified degree, in the *coloniae*; the aim of Roman religious 'tolerance' was to leave the religious practice of all constituent cities and peoples intact so far as possible, since there was no means, except for the institutions of the imperial cult, of linking centre with periphery in this regard. Insofar as integration between the systems occurred, it did so through the initiative of local élites, especially within the *municipia* and *civitas*-capitals of the Latin-speaking west.[96]

I do not think that the impulse behind the expansion of the oriental cults in the Hellenistic-Roman world had anything to do with dissatisfaction with an existing system, let alone its radical failure. Rather their success was due to a variety of factors: the demand in an increasingly differentiated world for differentiated religious experience beyond the confines of the family; the provision of relatively specialised religious experiences in a context in which religion was increasingly seen as a special order of discourse and practice; the creation of relatively accessible yet specialist social contexts where knowledge of a new and significant kind could be exchanged; the offer of a variety of new symbolic roles and functions. Among these factors, prayer, or, to put it more generally, specialised discursive opportunities, should not be underestimated.

We may take it those who got to the point of being initiated into one or other of the oriental cults considered themselves, and were considered by most others in their social groups, as pious (by piety in this context I mean the strict observance of the demands made by the gods).[97] Indeed, it seems very likely that the social and religious integration of initiates

(1981) 736–826; idem, The Cult of Virtues and Roman Imperial Ideology, *ANRW* II.17.2 (1981) 827–948; J.-P. Martin, *Providentia Deorum: Recherches sur certains aspects religieiux du pouvoir impérial romain*. CEFR 61 (Rome 1982); M. Bergmann, *Die Strahlen der Herrscher. Theomorphes Herrscherbild und politische Symbolik im Hellenismus und der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Mainz 1998).

[96] T. Derks, *Gods, Temples and Ritual Practice: The Transformation of Religious Ideas and Values in Roman Gaul*. Amsterdam Archaeological Studies 2 (Amsterdam 1998); Spickermann 2003.

[97] Cf. H. Wagenvoort, Pietas, in idem, *Pietas. Selected Studies in Roman Religion* (Leyden 1980) 1–20.

into these cults went hand in hand. The typical expression of this piety is a self-consciously humble order of discourse, submissive to the will of the increasingly grand, indeed almighty, deity.[98] The ostensible aim is not to achieve the concrete end one wants; rather the deity is to be moved by the sincerity of the appeal made to him or her, such that the individual can share in the formation of his own destiny. The claim to be a servant of the deity (ὑπηρέτης, δοῦλος, λάτρις) is taken as proof of *pietas*. In Latin, *famulus*, slave, of a god becomes a perfectly acceptable self-description: after his first initiation, Lucius comes to realise that he is being asked to become a *famulus* of Osiris too: *prohinc me quoque peti magno etiam deo famulum sentire deberem* (Apuleius, *Met.* 11.27). The word seems to have been borrowed from a locution, perhaps even a sort of technical term, in the cult of Cybele, most familiar to us in a negative sense, as in the lament of Catullus' Attis: *Ego nunc eum ministra et Cybeles famula ferar?* (l. 68, cf. 90; 52).[99] After two centuries of Christian use of the word to express a humble relationship to God, by the late fourth century we even find Aconia Fabia Paulina, the wife of the extremely aristocratic Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, calling herself, or rather announcing herself as being described by her husband, as *famula divis*.[100]

We may perhaps invoke a late fourth-century Christian source to give us an idea of the emotional attitudes implied by the mysteries. Evagrius of Pontus (c.346–99) wrote a work *De oratione* (περὶ προσευχῆς), in which he gives us a good idea of the attitudes towards prayer in his own day, irrespective of the particular brand of worship.[101] "Prayer," he tells

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[98] Nock 1925; Bömer 1957–63, 3: 207f.; Pleket 1981, 159–71; D.B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven 1990); Alvar 1999; C. Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* (Oxford 2005) 348: "The listener/reader is invited to identify him- or herself with the slave and/or the other subordinate characters" (on Midrashic king/slave parables).

[99] Other negative occurrences in relation to Cybele: Cicero, *De leg.* 2.22; Livy 37.9.9; Valerius Flaccus 3.20; Pentheus: Ovid, *Met.* 3, 574; of an actor/delator: Martial 9.28.10 (*famulus Iovis*). Occasionally in a positive sense: Horace, *Epist. ad Pisones* (*Ars poetica*) 239 (Silenus *custos ac famulus* of Bacchus); Vergil, *Aen.* 11.558 (of Camilla); Germanicus, *Arat.* 38 (of Cybele); Manilius 4.760 (of Cybele's lions); Seneca, *Ag.* 255 (of Cassandra).

[100] *CIL* VI 1779, rev. l. 24 = *ILS* 1259 = *CCCA* 3: 62–4 no. 246.

[101] Text ap. I. Hausherr, *Le leçons d'un contemplatif: Le traité de l'Oraison d'Évagre le Pontique* (Paris 1960); tr. M.-O. Goudet, ap. *Évagre: de la prière à la perfection* (Paris 1992); cf. A. Guillaumont, Un philosophe au désert: Évagre le Pontique, *RHR* 181 (1972) 29–56; idem, *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien. Pour une phénoménologie du monachisme* (Bellefontaine 1979); E.A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy. The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton 1992) 66–84.

us, "is an intimate spiritual relation to God" (§3). A little later there appears an assumption about 'true' prayer that seems to be characteristic of the entire late Roman period: "Make sure all your prayers are accompanied by tears. They guarantee success. The Lord delights in tearful prayer" (§6). We may note a further point surely valid for the 'oriental' mysteries too: "Do not rely solely on external gestures and comportment: direct your mind towards the idea of fervent spiritual prayer" (§28). Such injunctions are the behavioural correlate of a self-definition as 'servant'.

Not all prayer was of this type however. The oriental gods were nothing if not ὑπήκοοι, ἐπήκοοι, *di praesentes*. The motives for invocation were naturally very varied, though many will have been prompted by extraordinary circumstances or immediate needs. A series of Hellenistic epigrams, the earliest dating from the later third century BC, thematise dedications by *galli* in thanks for divine intervention: in one ascribed to Dioscorides, Atys, on the road between Pessinus and Sardis, takes shelter as night falls in a cave. A savage lion appears; τινος αὔρῃ δαίμονος, Atys beats the *tympanon*, thus frightening the beast away; in gratitude to her, he dedicates either the cave itself or a portable model of a shrine (θαλάμη) and the tambourine to the goddess.[102] Despite the detailed variation, some of it apparently comic, all emphasise Cybele's miraculous saving intervention. The miracle of Claudia Quinta fits perfectly into this tradition: *mota dea est sequiturque ducem laudatque sequendo* (Ovid, *Fasti* 4.327); καὶ ἡ θεὸς ἕσπετο (Appian, *Hann*. 7.56, 234.3).[103] For her

[102] Dioscorides ap. *AnthPal.* 6.220 Waltz = Gow-Page, ll. 1539–54, Dioscorides no. 16 with their comm.; the others are Alcaeus ap. *AnthPal* 6.217 = Gow-Page, ll. 134–43, Alcaeus no. 21; Antipater, *AnthPal*. 6.219 Waltz = Gow-Page ll. 608–31, Antipater no. 64; Simonides ap. *AnthPal* 6.217 Waltz = Gow-Page, ll. 3504–3313, 'Simonides' no. 2; on the motif, cf. D. Gall, Catulls Attis—Gedicht im Licht der Quellen, *WJA* 23 (1999) 83–99; Harder 2004, 577–79. As Gall points out, Catullus seems to have inverted this topos in introducing the chastening lion at 63.75–90. For the portable *naiskos* rather than an entire cave, see A.S.F. Gow, The *Gallus* and the Lion, *JHS* 80 (1960) 88–93 at 93.

[103] Bömer ad loc. IV 300 notes the typological quality of the narrative of the *casta persona* who frees the way for the impeded god/saint to proceed; cf. J.N. Bremmer, Slow Cybele's Arrival, in idem and N.M. Horsfall (eds.), *Roman Myth and Mythography*. BICS Suppl. 52 (London 1987) 105–11. The 'commemorative' statue of Claudia Quinta in the vestibule of the Palatine temple of Mater Magna was itself later spared by no less than two fires, one in 111 BC, the other apparently in the late Republic; at any rate, Augustus certainly rebuilt it in 3 BC (Val. Max. 1.8.11; Tacitus, Ann. 4.64.4 with Furneaux ad loc.; Augustus, *RG* §19 Malcovati; cf. P. Pensabene, s.v. Magna Mater, Aedes, *LTUR* 3, 206f.).

part, Isis has a good claim to be called ἡ σώτειρα par excellence.[104] One of Isidorus' hymns at Medinet Madi claims:

> ὅσσοι δ' ἐμ μοίραις θανάτου συνέχονται ἐν εἱρκτῆι,
> καὶ ὅσοι ἀγρυπνίαις μεγάλαις ὀχλοῦντ' ὀδυνηραῖς,
> καὶ οἱ ἐν ἀλλοτρίηι χῶρηι πλανοώμενοι ἄνδρες…
> ξώζονθ' οὗτοι ἅπαντες, ἐπευξάμενοί σε παρεῖναι.[105]
>
> Hymn I, ll. 29–34 (Bernand 1969, 633) = Vanderlip 1972, 17f.

The most expressive word here is παρεῖναι: what is desired is the actual presence of the deity. Indeed, the narrative recording of miracles vouchsafed in response to prayer, as in the epigraph, was a regular sub-genre in the cult of Isis and Serapis.[106] The transformation of Lucius back into a human-being is an over-familiar example.[107] A workshop, perhaps in Rome, during the second century AD produced a minor genre of amulets hung round the neck to protect children from dangers that carry the epiklesis νεικᾷ ἡ Εἶσις.[108] Given that the main Isiac festival in the Graeco-Roman world (which seems not to have been Egyptian)[109] was the *Isidis navigium* on 5th March, it is hardly surprising that much of our evidence for Isis' intervention relates to sea-faring. In the standard

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[104] Σώτειρα is one of her most frequent votive epithets: *SB* 10. 10683 (Alexandria, III-II[a]); *RICIS* 202/0170 (Sarapieion C, Delos; with Sarapis), 202/0365 (ibid.), 204/1004 (Kos). Originally the concept seems to have applied solely to Ptolemy IV Philopator and his wife Arsinoe (cf. *RICIS* 402/0601 [dedicated after the battle of Raphia in 217 BC] and the texts there cited, but was evidently soon 'democratised'. Even more common for Isis is ἐπήκοος (*RICIS* lists 13 cases). Among many concrete examples, note Protos son of Pythion σωθεὶς ἐκ πολλῶν καὶ μεγάλων κινδύνων (Sarapieion C, Delos, mid-II[a]): *RICIS* 204/0108; P. Aurelius Dioskouros at Lepcis Magna, ἐκ μεγάλης νόσου διασωθείς: *AE* 2003: 1903b l. 14f. (to Sarapis and σύνναοι θεοί); a *librarius* of the Colonia Ostiensis, P. Cornelius Victorinus, dedicated a statuette of Mars with a horse to Isis Regina, *restitutrici salutis meae*: *CIL* XIV 343 = *RICIS* 503/1118.

[105] "As many as are bound fast in prison, in the power of death, As many as are in pain through long, anguished, sleepless nights, All who are wanderers in a foreign land…All (these) are saved if they pray that You may be present to help", tr. Vanderlip (= Totti no. 21).

[106] Cf. Totti nos. 12–17.

[107] On the transformation as a typical marvel, cf. Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2000, 80–84.

[108] G. Sacco, Un amuleto isiaco dalla via Latina, in *Epigraphica: Atti delle Giornate di Studio di Roma e Atene in memoria di Margherita Guarducci (1902–1999)*. Opuscula epigraphica 10 (Rome 2003) 141–50 counts seven cases.

[109] Cf. Bergman 1968, 198–205; P. Bruneau, Isis Pélagia à Délos (compléments), *BCH* 87 (1963) 301–08 at 306–08; Bricault 2006b, 16 and 177. J.G. Griffiths, The Egyptian Antecedents of the Isidis Navigium, *Studia Aegyptiaca I. Recueil d'études dédiées à Vilmos Wessetzky à l'occasion de son 65[e] anniversaire* (Budapest 1974) 129–136, argued that there were Egyptian precursors.

self-predication, she claims to have invented θαλάσσια ἔργα, matters nautical.[110] In the 'literary' version from Andros, she it was who first hit upon the idea of praising men's nautical endeavours.[111] At Pelusium, on the most easterly arm of the Nile Delta, she was named ὁρμίστρια, the one who brings the voyager safely back to harbour (*P.Oxy*. 1380 l. 73f.).[112] Pausanias mentions that in his day there was a shrine to Isis Pelagia just off the agora of Corinth on the road up to Acrocorinth.[113] All over the eastern Mediterranean thanks were offered her for the safe accomplishment of a voyage, attested by (rather uncommon) votives to Isis *Euploia, Pelagia* or *Pharia*,[114] or perhaps to Isis Fortuna, who is often shown with a rudder.[115] One of the earliest accessions to the British Museum was a fine pottery lamp found in the sea off Pozzuoli, in the shape of ship being steered by Isis and Serapis and bearing the epiklesis Εὔπλοια, "Safe voyage!".[116] In all these cases, σωτηρία or *salus* is to be

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[110] *RICIS* 302/0204 l. 15 (Kyme, also Ios [202/1101] and Thessalonike [113/0545]); also the charts in Bruneau 1974, 353–55; P. Bruneau, Isis Pélagia à Délos, *BCH* 85 (1961) 435–46 at 443; Vanderlip 1972, 33f.

[111] *IG* XII.5, 739 = Totti no. 2 = *RICIS* 202/1801 l. 34f. (I[a]); also the poetic embellishment in ll. 145–57.

[112] For the location, see Barrington, Map 72, H2. The epithet is not attested epigraphically.

[113] Paus. 2.4.6 with Musti/Torelli 2 p. 231f. ad loc.; cf. D.G. Smith, The Egyptian Cults at Corinth, *HThR* 70 (1977) 201–31; E.J. Milleker, Three Heads of Sarapis from Corinth, *Hesperia* 51 (1982) 121–35. Bruneau 1974, 337 pointed out that *SIRIS* 34, to Εἴσιδι Πελαγίᾳ εὐακόῳ, supposedly found at Corinth but now lost, is a *falsa* copied from *RICIS* 205/0302 (Mytilene, also lost). It is duly omitted from *RICIS* by L. Bricault.

[114] The sole votive examples of *Euploia* are: *RICIS* 202/0329 (Sarapieion C, Delos, ?II[a]); 202/0365 (ibid., ?II-I[a]); of *Pelagia*: 205/0302 (Mytilene, ?I[a]; see previous note); 305/1402 (Iasos, Roman period; reads Ἴσι[δι Πε λ]αγίᾳ); of *Pharia*: 402/0501 (Balaneia in Syria-Phoenicia, Roman); 503/1204 (Portus, ?II[p]); see now the discussion in Bricault 2006b, making the same point. For a sample of such images, see Tran tam Tinh 1990, 1: 782–86 nos. 269–315. Bruneau 1974 objects to the denomination 'Isis Pelagia' for the (mainly numismatic) image of Isis standing on a ship, with her tunic or veil bellying out as a sail, preferring 'Isis à la voile'. Bricault 2006a, 84 agrees.

[115] The suggestion that Isis Fortuna often conceals Isis 'Pelagia' was made by Malaise 1972a, 180f., followed by Bruneau 1974, 379–81. Bricault suggests that σώτειρα in the Aegean islands had the same force (ap. *RICIS* 204/0108); cf. the graffito at the entrance to the harbour at Pompeii, Εἰσιτύχη σῴζουσα: *CIL* IV 4138 = *RICIS* 504/0216. Bricault 2006a, 84–90 -90 assembles a mass of numismatic and dactylic evidence for the maritime engagement of the Egyptian deities, showing how closely safe sea-journeys were linked to the wider ideas of prosperity and 'salvation'; see also, in greater detail, idem 2006b.

[116] H.B. Walters, *Catalogue of Lamps in the British Museum* (London 1914) no. 390 with pl. X = *IG* XIV 2045.48 = Merkelbach 1995, pl. 213 = *RICIS* 504/0403 (I–II[p]). The inventory no. is 100.

understood concretely, just as in the case of the numerous votives set up in gratitude for being healed or cured.[117]

3. Rituals in the Phrygian Cults

a. *Introduction*

The transfer of Cybele to Rome had implications both for the cult's ritual dimension as well as for its institutions, real and imaginary.[118] According to Livy, the image that was brought to Rome in 204 BC and placed in the temple of Victoria on the Palatine was a plain stone, in which the deity was believed to dwell.[119] Late-Roman images of the stone as it was borne into the Circus Maximus on a *ferculum* for the *Megalensia* suggest that the object then in use was a squat, roughly conical

[117] E.g. P. Aurelius Dioskouros at Lepcis Magna, ἐκ μεγάλης νόσου διασωθείς: *AE* 2003: 1903b l. 14f. (to Sarapis and σύνναοι θεοί).

[118] A more or less complete list of the sources will be found in Erskine 2001, 206. The general credibility of the major narratives of Livy 29.10.4–11.8; 14.5–14 and Ovid, *Fasti* 4.247–348 has been impugned by e.g. Schmidt 1909, 1–18; Bömer 1964 (cf. his comm. on the Ovid passage, 2: 228–30) and more recently Berneder 2004. Even if we agree with Wissowa that Schmidt "freilich in radikaler Skepsis zu weit geht" (1912, 318) it is far from clear which details are reliable and which fiction. It is really a matter of deciding whether, with the majority, to support Livy, cf. most recently P.J. Burton, The Summoning of the Magna Mater to Rome (205 BC), *Historia* 45 (1996) 36–63; Erskine 2001, 212–18; or, with Gruen 1990, 5–33, Ovid, esp. *Fasti* 4.331–48, cf. 181–87. I take the latter view: J. Alvar, Esconografía para una recepción divina: la introducción de Cibeles en Roma, *DHA* 20 (1994) 149–69.

[119] Livy 29.11.7; 14.14. Livy uses the expression *lapis sacer*; the word for such objects in English, Germanic and Romance languages is some version of Greek βαίτυλος (etym. unknown), transliterated into Latin as *baetulus*; Pliny, *HN* 37.135 quotes from the early IV[a] Greek lithographic writer Sotakos the information that there are two sorts of *gemmae cerauniae*, semi-precious stones that fall from heaven; of these, *baetuli* are roundish, black ones, which are sacred, look like axe-heads, and could be used to capture cities. Damascius, *Vit. Isidori* §94 p. 138 Zintzen claims that they were common on Mt Lebanon near Heliopolis; elsewhere he describes their marvellous properties, as a manifestation of the god Gennaios = Genneas (§203). However, no ancient source authorises the use of this word for the sacred stones of Cybele (of which there were many); cf. C. Auffarth, s.v. Baitylia, I, *DNP* 2 (1997) 405; W.K. Pritchett, *Pausanias Periegetes*. Ἀρχαία Ἕλλας 6 (Amsterdam 1998) 99–101. For the ἄγαλμα falling from the sky: Herodian 1.11.1; although, as is clear from Pausanias' usage, the word need not mean a statue in the usual sense, Herodian clearly assumes it was; hence his complaint that the name of the sculptor is unknown.

stone with a flattened top.[120] It thus had no marked, or even recognisable, phallic symbolism. Of course by 204 BC the Mater Magna had already for at least two centuries been represented in Greek anthropomorphic form: the Romans knew her cult from Athens, where there had been a public temple to her in the Agora, the Metroon, with its famous 'Pheidian' statue of the goddess, since at least the late fifth century;[121] from the Piraeus, where the private cult, documented already in 281/0, was transformed into a semi-public one (conducted by the *orgeones*, i.e. without any 'oriental' features) in the late third century, or even earlier;[122] from Delos, where there was a Metroon at least as early as 208 BC (as at Athens, it served as a public archive), and where several images of the goddess are listed in temple inventories both before and after 166 BC;[123] and finally from Sicily, for example at Colle Orbo and the major site at Akrai, which was clearly modelled on Anatolian shrines, such as that of Kapikaye at Pergamum.[124] At the end of the Hannibalic war, P. Scipio Africanus famously dedicated some spoils at her shrine in the city of Engyum, later raided by Verres (Cicero, 2*Verr*. 4.97; 5.186).[125] The claim to have acquired a stone—certainly not 'the' stone but perhaps

[120] Both forms, *Megalensia* and (*ludi*) *Megalenses* have good authority; I follow the form usual in the late Republic and early Principate.

[121] H.A. Thompson and R.E. Wycherley, *The Athenian Agora, 14: The Agora of Athens: The History, Shape and uses of an Ancient City Center* (Princeton 1972) 29–38, arguing still for a high date, as Thompson had done from 1937; J.S. Boersma, *Athenian Building Policy from 561/0 to 405/4 BC* (Groningen 1970) 31–34; R.C.T. Parker, *Athenian Religion: A History* (Oxford 1996) 159f., 188–98; M. Munn, *The Mother of the Gods, Athens, and the Tyranny of Asia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 2006) 58–64, 317–49, all for different reasons stressing the late-V^{a} interest in the goddess, for a low one. Even if, as Noel Robertson argues, The Ancient Mother of the Gods. A Missing Chapter in the History of Greek Religion, in Lane 1996, 239–304, Μήτηρ θεῶν was an indigenous deity, there can be no doubt, from the archaeological evidence found in the Agora, that she was assimilated to Cybele by the mid/late-fourth cent. BCE at the latest (cf. *IG* II–III^{2} 1.2 no. 1257, 324/3 BC) and probably by the late V^{a}. For Agorakritos' statue, note Pausanias 1.3.5 with Beschi and Musti ad loc. (p. 272 l. 52), Pliny, *HN* 36.17; Arrian, *Periplous* 9.1 (A. Silberman's commentary in the Budé p. 30 adds nothing); cf. Naumann 1983, 159–69.

[122] *IG* II–III^{2} 1.2 no. 1273 (281/0 BC, still a *thiasos*); 1314–16 (213/2, 211/0 and 'late III^{a}'); later texts: 1327–29; cf. Nilsson, *GGR* 2: 114f.; Vermaseren 1977, 35; Borgeaud 1996, 31–55.

[123] Bruneau 1970, 431–35. The Metroon may have been situated at the end of the *dromos* of Sarapieion C, built in the late third cent. BC.

[124] Cf. Sfameni Gasparro 1973, 114–55; eadem, Per la storia del culto di Cibele in Occidente, il santuario rupestre di Akrai, in Lane 1996, 51–86; eadem 1999, 359–64.

[125] Diod. Sic. 4.9–80 however claims that the temple was dedicated to the Cretan Μήτερες.

one of very many stones associated with the goddess—from 'Pessinus' through the good offices of Attalus I Soter (241–197 BC) must therefore be interpreted as a sort of one-upmanship, since in later Rome there was no dearth of perfectly normal representations of the Mater Magna on her throne (see Frontispiece).

The standard accounts, ancient and modern, of the early history of the Phrygian cults at Rome insist on the fact that it was not simply a new deity that was introduced but an entire cult, complete with a liturgy, processions and cult-attendants from a religious tradition quite different from the Roman (cf. Ferri 2006, 236–8). As Mommsen, true son of a north-German Lutheran pastor, put it in a passage of memorable distaste:

> So mußte dennoch der wüste Apparat der "großen Mutter", diese mit dem Obereunuchen an der Spitze unter fremdländischer Musik von Pfeifen und Pauken in orientalischer Kleiderpracht durch die Gassen aufziehende und von Haus zu Haus bettelnde Priesterschaft und das ganze sinnlich-mönchische Treiben von wesentlichsten Einfluß auf die Stimmung und Anschauung des Volkes sein.[126]

On the authority of a well-known passage of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, it is generally thought that some of these features were at once found so foreign and dreadful that they had to be forbidden by a decree of the Senate:

> The praetors perform sacrifices and celebrate games in her honour every year according to the Roman customs (κατὰ τοὺς Ῥωμαίων νόμους), but the priest and priestess of the goddess are Phrygians, and it is they who carry her image in procession through the city, begging alms in her name according to their custom (μητραγυρτοῦντες, ὥσπερ αὐτοῖς ἔθος) and wearing figures upon their breasts (τύπους περικείμενοι τοῖς στήθεσι),[127] and striking their timbrels while their followers play tunes upon their flutes in honour of the Mother of the Gods. But by a law and decree of the Senate, no native Roman (Ῥωμαίων τῶν αὐθιγενῶν οὔτε…) walks in procession through the city arrayed in parti-coloured robe, begging alms or escorted by flute-players, or worships the goddess with the Phrygian ceremonies (οὔτε ὀργιάζει τὴν θεὸν τοῖς φρυγίοις ὀργιασμοῖς).
>
> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 2.19.4f. (tr. Spelman-Cary)

[126] Mommsen 1889, 1: 869f.

[127] With reference to an incident in Galatia in 189 BC, Polybius uses the expression ἔχοντες προστηθίδια καὶ τύπους (21.37.6, cf. 6.7 with Walbank ad loc.). These objects clearly belonged to the full regalia of such priests.

The literary tradition thus offers a sharp contrast between the account of the triumphant, indeed miraculous, entry in 204 BC, with a happy people bringing gifts to the goddess and a rapid curtailment, even proscription, in the following years.[128] The explanation offered in antiquity, and largely followed today, was designed to mask this contradiction.[129] The first celebration of the *Megalensia*, apparently already in 204 BC, later, from 194 BC, with *ludi scaenici* (Livy 34.54.3), and the dedication of the temple of the Mater Magna on the Palatine with *ludi scaenici* on 10th April 191 (Livy 36.36.3f. with Briscoe ad loc.), naturally involved the imposition of a regular Roman festival upon the strange new cult.[130] These arrangements were duly carried out by the praetors, as we have seen, yet the priests of the cult, all of them foreigners, impeded the attempts at Romanisation by insisting on maintaining their traditional rites. "Ce n'était pas moins à une Orientale, inconnue aux milieux italiques, que l'aristocratie romaine assurait son appui et que la foule portait ses dons, au sanctuaire de la Victoire, son hôtesse provisoire" (Bayet 1957, 152).

As it stands, this account contains two main problems. Given the familiarity of the Roman élite with the Hellenised East,[131] it seems highly unlikely that the Senate was so ignorant of the real nature of the Phrygian cults that it went ahead and introduced them on the say-so of the Sibylline oracle, and then found it had to curtail the religious practices actually involved.[132] Even if we assume that the Senate was working on the supposition that it was only admitting an 'authentic'

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[128] Wiseman 1984; Beard 1994; Nauta 2004, 618–25.

[129] E.g. Latte 1960, 259f.: "Es ist nicht wahrscheinlich, daß der Senat von dem Wesen dieses Kultes eine klare Vorstellung gehabt hat"; cf. F. Altheim, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (Baden-Baden 1953) 2: 51; Vermaseren 1977, 39; Borgeaud 1995, 101–3; Beard, North, Price 1998, 1: 97; Roller 1999, 264–71.

[130] For the temple, which had a massive podium (78 × 113 R feet = 17.10 × 33.18m), see Pensabene 1978; 1988; Richardson 1992, 242; Stamper 2005, 118 with p. 117 fig. 88.

[131] Cf. G. Clemente, Esperti, ambasciatori del Senato e la formazione della politica estera romana tra il III e il II secolo, *Athenaeum* 54 (1976) 319–52; E. Gabba, Aspetti culturali dell' imperialismo romano, *Athenaeum* 65 (1977) 49–74; E.S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1984) 1: 203ff., 316ff. (mutual knowledge); cf. idem 1990, 1–33. The same point is made from a different perspective by P. Oliva, Die Wolken im Westen. Griechenland und die Ankunft der Römer, *Gymnasium* 100 (1993) 1–18; on the later period, cf. J. Ferrary, *Philhellénisme et Impérialisme. Aspects idéologiques de la conquête romaine du monde Hellénistique*. BEFAR 271 (Rome 1988).

[132] Sfameni Gasparro 1999, 374ff. and M. Monaca, *La Sibilla a Roma: I libri sibillini fra religione e politica*. Collana di studi storico-religiosi 8 (Cosenza 2005) 216–20 revive

version of the hellenised cult, such ingenuousness hardly fits with its usual well-informed caution. If the cult was later repressed or reformed, the reasons must have been different. Moreover, had the outlandishness of the cult's rituals really been as marked as the literary tradition claims, it would have been quite unnecessary to repress it, since no Roman would have been attracted to it in the first place.

I therefore incline to think that the true reasons for the repression of the cult (assuming it to be a fact about the early second century BC) had nothing to do with the exoticism of its rituals. If we have to go along with the literary narratives, I prefer a political account. In my view, the literary account of the reception of the goddess, which highlights the role of the old aristocracy, was a means of masking antecedent popular unrest expressed in a religious idiom. This popular pressure, which evidently included demands that the Mater Magna be brought to Rome in order to guarantee victory over Hannibal, was simply occluded by the version that made the dominant class responsible for her introduction. This version attempted to represent the goddess' introduction as legitimate in a threefold sense: inspired by consultation of the Sibylline books, approved by the Senate, and centred on the figure of Scipio Nasica. A scenario such as this would account for the claim that the Senate approved the entry of the cult even though it must have known perfectly well what it involved; and explain why, having failed to win the first round, it soon set about 'domesticating' it by assimilating it to its own ritual models, forbidding direct participation in the processions, and forcing the people into the role of passive spectators.[133]

The attraction of this view is that it understands the Senate's (majority) position as consistently hostile to the introduction of the Phrygian cult; the 'Roman order' was always in fact the order of the dominant class. This class was worried by the implications for its own religious and existential rationality of the cult's orgiastic character and the practice of self-gelding. Even the preliminary symbolic effort at Romanisation, the *lavatio* of the stone in the Almo, a tributary of the Tiber, could not keep such contamination at bay. There followed repression or partial occlusion, itself reluctant testimony to the fear that the assimi-

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the old suggestion that the *Xviri* were following the model of the introduction of Venus Erycina in 217 BC.

[133] Scullard 1973 notoriously managed to discuss this period in detail without ever referring either to the Mater Magna or the *Megalensia*. Religion is religion and politics is politics.

lation had proceeded far more rapidly than the dominant order could wish. We might find support for such a reading in Valerius Maximus' account of the people's hostile reaction to the decision of the aediles for 194 BC, C. Attilius Serranus and L. Scribonius Libo, allegedly on the recommendation of the consul Scipio Africanus, to separate the senatorial seats at these first *ludi scaenici* at the *Megalensia* from those of the people—the beginning of the famous fourteen rows.[134] Rather than read this simply in terms of hellenisation, I find it tempting to see it as part of an ongoing conflict over the acceptability of the cult of the Mater Magna. Moreover, it has recently been stressed that, in view of the number of later references to her, there must have been a powerful (popular) oral tradition relating to Claudia Quinta and her marvel (Erskine 2001, 218). This could be read as popular resistance to the official version.

This political argument however does have two main weaknesses. In the first place, the high aristocracy used the festival of the Mater Magna, according to Cicero in the year that Cato the Elder was quaestor, i.e. already in 204 BC, as the occasion for lavish banquets, the *mutitationes*.[135] The argument of general hostility to the goddess cannot account for this rapid assimilation of the cult into the socio-cultural modes of the aristocracy.[136] The second is that it has no place for the one archaeological fact that we know about the early popular cult of the Mater Magna at Rome, namely that, as many of the terracotta votives found in the area of the Palatine temple by Guido Boni and later by Pietro Romanelli in the 1950s indicate, it was focused largely on the child Attis, already in the second century BC.[137] To judge from

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[134] Valerius Maximus 2.4.3, cf. 4.5.1. The tradition is complex: for the texts, cf. T.P. Wiseman, *Phoenix* 27 (1973) 189–98 at 195; Livy 34.44.5, with Briscoe ad loc., suppresses the detail about the people's hostility; cf. R.C. Beachem, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience* (London 1991) 62f.

[135] Cicero, *De senect*. 45 with J.G.F. Powell ad loc.; *Fasti Praenest. prid. Non. April.* (*CIL* I^2 p. 235): *Ludi M.D.M.I. Megalensia vocantur quod ea dea Megale appellatur. Nobilium mutitationes cenarum solitae sunt frequenter fieri quod Mater Magna ex libris Sibullinis arcessita locum mutavit ex Phrygia Romam*; Aulus Gellius, *NA* 18.2.11; cf. Preller 1858, 451; Wissowa 1912, 318f.; Becher 1991, 163; Rüpke 2007a, 144.

[136] Cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 4.353–56 with Bömer ad loc.; Aulus Gellius, *NA* 2.24.2 reports a SC of 161 BC evidently shortly before the Lex Fannia of the same year, specifically limiting expenditure and display at these *mutitationes*; cf. J. André, *L'alimentation et la cuisine à Rome*^{2} (Paris 1981) 224; missed by Scullard 1973, 222.

[137] Romanelli 1963; a useful check-list in *CCCA* 3: 11–36 nos. 14–199, pls. XXI–XCVII (not all Attides however). Romanelli considered them to date from c. 25 BC, but in fact they date mainly from the II^p, being buried in the *favissae* after the fire of

this important but still neglected material, the population of Rome in the second century BC saw the Phrygian Great Mother, as evidently already much earlier in Greece, as one of several female deities that offered succour, protection and healing to family and children.[138] Attis was interpreted simply as a representative child. The cult was indeed popular, but in a manner completely different from the impression of unbridled, un-Roman excess given by Ovid and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Archaeologically, there is simply no evidence for the exoticism that looms so large there. If only we could be sure that that were the whole story, the distortions of the historical record might indeed be taken to be almost as far-reaching as Ernst Schmidt claimed in 1909.

b. *Emasculation*

Semper fac puer esse velis

Ovid, *Fasti* 4.226

ἐκ μὲν γὰρ ἀνδρῶν γάλλοι γίγνονται, ἐκ δὲ γάλλων ἄνδρες οὐ γίγνονται

Arcesilaus of Pitane (attrib.) ap. Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. phil.* 4.43, p. 287.17–19 Marcovich

Of the rituals associated with the Phrygian cults, two, the *taurobolium* and the self-gelding of the *galli*, have for obvious reasons attracted most scholarly attention, just as they attracted various types of obloquy in antiquity.[139] In my view the issue of gelding has too often been treated in rather anecdotal, formalist or phenomenological terms. In social anthropology, irreversible physical mutilation usually marks different stages in the process of social maturation (Leach 1976, 61). When such practices are taken over by a different culture, their precise connota-

111 BC (Becher 1991, 163). Bayet 1957, 152 n. 14 noted this discovery, without understanding its significance. Lambrechts, who had earlier (Lambrechts 1952b) committed himself to the claim that Attis was not a god at Rome before the supposed reforms of Antoninus Pius, steadfastly refused to admit that the new archaeological evidence proved anything about his status in this early period (1962; 1967). However, as Roller 1999, 277 observes: "[These terracottas] demonstrate that Attis was an essential part of the Mother's cult from its inception in Rome, far more prominent there than in the eastern Mediterranean region"; see also Lancellotti 2002, 77–9. Attis may not have been part of the state cult at this time, but he was evidently considered a god especially protective of children by the population.

[138] The popularity of the story of Claudia Quinta might be read as a continuing mythical legitimation of this family orientation, cf. Bömer 1964, 146f.

[139] Sanders 1972 offers an excellent collection of material on the *galli*; cf. on the Hellenistic evidence, Giammarco Razzano 1982.

tions tend to get lost. In this case, it was only in the fourth century AD that intellectuals were in a position to develop schemes in terms of which such practices could re-acquire their symbolic value. It was only then that the integrative function of rites of violence could be understood. The case of Isis was different, since persecution in that case was motivated by conflicts within the dominant class at Rome, not by the strangeness of the Egyptian rites.[140]

Philippe Borgeaud has recently argued that the *galli* practised (or suffered) total ablation, that is, the removal of testes, scrotum and penis.[141] This seems to me highly unlikely. In the first place, historically, total ablation is extremely uncommon, since the loss of blood involved meant that it was almost invariably fatal. It was practised in Qing China because radical sexlessness was required of court eunuchs, and there special surgical techniques were developed in order to increase the chances of survival; brutal ablation was practised on the so-called Black Eunuchs brought from the Horn of Africa to Islamic courts, but the death-rate was extremely high.[142] If, like Borgeaud (1996, 201 n. 73 = 2004, 43), we suppose the usual model, of the man ablating himself in a state of frenzied possession, death by loss of blood would have been the inevitable and invariable consequence. It seems improbable that

[140] Cf. Takács 1995, though in my view she fails to pay sufficient attention to conflicts between the classes and within the élite.

[141] Borgeaud 1996, 201 n. 74 (= 2004, 148 n. 74), citing G. Vorberg, *Glossarium eroticum* (Stuttgart 1932) 169. There are a number of relevant ancient words, e.g. ἐκτέμνειν, εὐνοῦχος, σπάδων, σαθροί, γάλλοι, θλιβίας, θλαδίας, *castrare, castratus, spado, gallus, bagoas, megabyz(x)us, thlibias, thlasias.* If the meaning of some is fairly exact (θλιβίας, θλαδίας mean resp. a man whose testicles have been rendered useless by being ligatured, by being crushed with a stone, cf. Plutarch, *Nicias* 13) the others are quite imprecise. As Ulpian observed: *spadonum generalis appellatio est: quo nomine tam hi, qui natura spadones sunt* (i.e. 'natural eunuchs', with hypogonadism due to chromosomal abnormalities such as Klinefelter's syndrome), *item thibliae thlasiae, sed et si quod alius genus spadonum est, continetur* (ap. Dig. 50.16.128). Elsewhere, in relation to dowry-rights, he opines that if a *spado* marries *distinguendum arbitror castratus fuerit, necne* (Dig. 23.3.39.1). Unlike other slaves, castrated men could neither 'marry' nor enjoy quasi-dowries; but any other kind of *spado* of this status might do so. In Roman Egypt, eunuchs evidently might make a testament, but their right to dispose of their property was tightly restricted: *Gnomon of the Idios Logos* §112 (*BGU* 5 p. 39).

[142] Cf. K.M. Ringrose, Eunuchs in Historical Perspective, *History Compass* 5.2 (2007) 495–506. Celsus remarks on the number of blood-vessels in this region: *Med.* 7.18.2; 19.4; and on the risk of heavy blood loss if the larger vessels leading to the scrotum are severed during an operation on the testes: ibid. 7.19.3: *ne (venae) periculose sanguinem fundant*. The real danger however lies in severing the large blood-vessels supplying the penis. A surgeon of course knew how to ligature or cauterise (small) blood-vessels: 8.19.8; 22.1; 22.5.

individuals would have volunteered to run such a risk, whatever their state of mind. Secondly, the loss of the penis means that the urethra has to be kept open by means of a tube to prevent it from occluding; and this of course would have led under ancient sanitary conditions to constant urinary infection, and worse. If this had been the case in the Graeco-Roman world, we would surely have heard about it in the medical writers.[143] Pliny twice uses an odd phrase, *citra perniciem*, when talking about the Galli: in one of these, he says *Matris deum sacerdotes, qui Galli vocantur, virilitatem amputare nec aliter* (i.e. with a sherd of Samian ware) *citra perniciem*.[144] *Pernicies*, a common word in Celsus, here clearly means 'danger', even 'life-threatening danger' rather than simply 'damage'.[145] This implies that the issue of safety, and the risks involved in self-castration, were indeed thematised among these men. One could not have used such an expression if total ablation had been involved, since, Samian ware here or there, it was always extremely dangerous.[146]

If we look more closely at the language used about the Galli in this connection, it dissolves. Take for example Juvenal's well-known phrase: *ingens semivir… mollia qui rapta secuit genitalia testa iam pridem* (6.513–15).[147] Such an expression is completely non-specific: we can see from the usage of Pliny and other Latin writers, which of course often applies to animals, that *genitalia* could be used freely to mean male genitals or female ones (in that case either internal or external); when used of the Jews, the word clearly denotes the penis; of the beaver or the lion, the

[143] Celsus, for example, discusses urethral catheters, made of bronze, at *Med.* 7.26.1, but does not mention the possibility of an ablated male patient.

[144] Pliny, *HN* 35.165; cf. 11.262: *citra perniciem amputantibus Matris deum Gallis*. In the passage quoted in the text, he cites a certain M. Caelius (unknown to *RE*; the Vitellius named there may be the profligate Q. Vitellius mentioned in Tac., *Ann.* 2.48.3 = *RE* Suppl. IX, 1962, 1741f. Vitellius no. 7g) for the claim that a sherd of Samian ware alone could prevent *pernicies* during self-castration.

[145] E.g. Celsus 1.3.6; 2.8.36; 43; 4.13.1 against 7.20.2.

[146] The mythical account of Attis' death of course implies that he bled to death as a result of gelding himself. The sole item of iconographic evidence relevant to this question is a relief from the Attideum at Ostia that shows the knife and the severed scrotum lying between Attis' legs; presumably the original colouring showed the blood pouring from the wound (*CCCA* 3: 119 no. 384, pl. CCXXXIX; Rieger 2004, 284 no. MMA 9 with p. 132 fig. 97b). The scrotum is just that: there is no penis attached. One could hardly wish for better evidence against Borgeaud's claim.

[147] *Mollis* of course hints both at the impotence associated with eunuchism and at pathic sexuality, cf. Martial 3.73.4f.: *mollem credere te virum volebam, sed rumor negat esse te cinaedum*. The comic juxtaposition of *genitalia testa* draws on the obvious pun *testis-testa*, which in my view is the origin of the trope about the Samian sherd. This would covertly acknowledge that the Galli lacked only their scrota/testicles.

scrotum/testes.[148] The real point is that eunuchism always excites comment. In antiquity, in relation to humans, it almost invariably evoked accusations of pathic sexuality: *cinaedus* is virtually the first idea evoked by the word *gallus*.[149] It is this automatic association that inspires the one text that seems clearly to state that the *galli* were totally ablated: *Quid cum femineo tibi, Baetice galle, barathro? haec debet medios lambere lingua viros. abscisa est quare Samia tibi mentula testa, si tibi tam gratus, Baetice, cunnus erat? Castrandum caput est*… (Martial 3.81.1–5).[150]

In my view, Martial had no interest in our question, total ablation or not? He is playing with a series of conventional oppositions, inversions and equivalences: male—female, no longer male = quasi-female, vulva—anus, mouth—anus, tongue = penis, head = penis. The basic joke is that *galli* are acknowledged to be men, but their absence of genitals, and their wearing of clothes classified as 'female', defines them as non-men; non-men ought to be pathic homosexuals, but Baeticus is behaving like a proper man with a woman—albeit with his tongue. The only way to put things right is to chop his head off too. For this sequence to work, Baeticus must be deprived of his penis, not his testicles. The same assumption is needed in the joke against Natta, who practises fellatio on his muscular *draucus, collatus cui gallus est Priapus* (11.72).[151] In

[148] Cf. *HN* 20.89; 22.140; 23.65, etc. (*testes* distinguished from *genitalia*, it is never clear whether this opposes male to female patients or testicles from penis); 23.74, 24.117, 188 etc. (simply *genitalibus*); 7.69 (female external); 11.262 (enlarged clitoris in some women); Jews: Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.2; *HA Hadr.* 14.2; = camel's penis, good for bowstrings: *HN* 11.261; beaver: Apuleius, *Met.* 1.9; lions etc.: Pliny, *HN* 10.17.3; ass: Apul., *Met.* 7.23. *Castrare* applied to male animals, i.e. removal of testes: Pliny, *HN* 8.108; 198; 11.168; 24.72; 30.41; 148 (of humans: 9.80; 11.230; 269); to female animals, by excision of the *vulva* (i.e. uterus): 8.68 (war-camels); 209 (sows and camels).

[149] The association gives point to the entire scenario of Martial 3.91, where a band of *galli* is imagined as trying to turn the boy-friend of a veteran into one of themselves by castrating him; and to the fragmentary 'Narrative about Iolaus' published as *POxy* 3010 by Peter Parsons, dated first half of II^{p}. The unnamed speaker has become a *gallus* in order to help Iolaus pretend to be one as well so as to gain access to a woman; for some reason he addresses Iolaus and a κίναιδος together.

[150] "What concern have you, eunuch Baeticus, with the feminine abyss? This tongue of yours should be licking male middles. Why was your cock cut off with a Samian sherd if you were so fond of a cunt, Baeticus? Your head should be castrated…" (tr. D.R. Shackleton-Bailey).

[151] Shackleton-Bailey rightly however translates "compared to whom Priapus is a eunuch", since too much specificity would spoil the joke. It is not meant to be pressed to produce the meaning 'has no penis'; the same applies to the phrase *gallo… Priapo* in 1.35.15; cf. *at nunc pro cervo* (i.e. a runaway slave) *mentula supposita est* (3.91.12). None of the passages cited by Kay 1985, 225 on 11.72.2 in fact supports the conclusion about ablation (Horace, *Sat.* 2.45 is not even about Galli in any sense). In 9.2.13f. Cybele

another epigram, 13.63, however, the joke depends on the *gallus* having a penis but no testicles.[152] In yet another, a *spado* is supposed to have a penis but be unable to use it (11.81).[153] Elsewhere, the *gallus* clearly just lacks his testicles (3.24.14: *caper*). There is no consistency here because such jokes are not concerned with the technicalities of castration, they are about the social meaning of unmanliness.[154] The social knowledge was that the *galli* were eunuchs and dressed in 'women's' clothes; in ordinary daily experience, as the new curse-tablets from the joint temple of Isis and the Mater Magna in Mainz show, it was the self-castigation and self-laceration by the *galli* and *bellonarii* in the streets, and the spattering of blood, that people noticed, even though they were aware of the fact of castration.[155] In view of these considerations, I conclude that the *galli* normally simply lacked testicles and scrotum. Although the ideal was to perform this operation in a frenzy, on the model of

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herself is supposed to produce *cinaedi*; which allows Martial to slide to his point, that their bad-mannered host should have been paid back by having his penis cut off.

[152] *Ne nimis exhausto macresceret inguine gallus* (i.e. a rooster), *amisit testes. Nunc mihi gallus* (i.e. a eunuch) *erit*; cf. 13.64. Likewise in 2.45, the fact that Glyptus can now have had himself circumcised (*praecisa mentula*) shows that, if he were already a *gallus*, he must still have possessed a penis. But it is obvious that in many of these scoptic poems *gallus* has lost its technical meaning of a mendicant follower of Cybele; the same process is clear in late Hellenistic Greek: *Epist. 'Diogen. Sinop.'* 11 (p. 16 Müseler): γάλλοις καὶ κιναιδολόγοις μεταδιδῶσι (date uncertain, between late II^{a} and II^{p}, but the technical sense appears in the next sentence); Josephus, *AJ* 4 §290 (list of 'Mosaic' laws): γάλλους ἐκτρέπεσθαι…δῆλον γὰρ, ὡς τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῖς τεθηλυσμένης μετεκοσμήσαντο πρὸς τοῦτο καὶ τὸ σῶμα (this is the sole occurrence of the word in J.); in the *Gnomon of the Idios Logos* §112 (*BGU* 5 p. 39, c. 150 CE), γάλλοι are paired with σαθροί, impotent men, without any reference to the technical meaning.

[153] Cf. Kay 1985, 239 ad loc. on the popularity of eunuchs as sexual partners, e.g. Caelia in 6.67, who only has *eunuchos* as slaves, because *vult futui nec parere*.

[154] Cf. *Appendix proverbiorum* 1 §67 (*CPG* 1 p. 389) s.v. γαλλιστὶ τεμεῖν· γάλλοι καλοῦνται ἢ…ἢ ὅτι μεταπεπτώκασιν εἰς ἑτέραν φύσιν; cf. Macarius 2 §92 (*CPG* 2 p. 152f.); ὁ ἄλλος τις γενόμενος καὶ μεταβαλὼν τὴν φύσιν ἐξ ἀνδρῶν, καὶ οὔτε ἄνηρ ὢν οὔτε γυνή: *Etym. mag.* p. 220.22–24 Gaisford; ὁ ἄλλος τις γενόμενος καὶ μεταβαλὼν τὴν φύσιν ἐξ ἀνδρῶν: Etym. Gudianum, p. 296.6f. de Stefani.

[155] Cf. Blänsdorf 2005, 674 no. 182,4 = 2008, Appdx., no. 16 ll. 9–11: *quomodo galli Bellonari magal[i] sibi sanguinem ferventem fundunt, frigid[um] ad terram venit*…; 17 A6: *quomodo galli se secarunt*…. Earlier in no. 16, however, though the self-laceration comes first, reference is also made to self-castration: 16 ll. 5f.: *quomodo galli se secant et praecidunt virilia sua*…. Only in 18 ll. 3: *ita ut galli Bellonarive absciderunt concideruntve se*…does the self-castration come first. This is logical, since in order to become self-lacerating Galli they had to have castrated themselves/been castrated in the past. In these latter cases, the reference to the self-castration does not really fit the context as well as spattered blood does: it is extraneous social knowledge forcing its way into the curse through the metonymic chain Mater Magna—*gallus*—de-manned—*cinaedus*—weakness—death. *Epist. 'Diogen. Sinop.'* 11 (p. 16 Müseler) also notes the attraction of Galli as a street-spectacle.

Attis in the myth,[156] we must certainly allow for a variety of practices, including consecration of boys during childhood in the region of Pessinus (and probably therefore ligaturing the testes), and perhaps even surgical removal.[157]

We may now move on to the name. We do not know how or where the term Gallus originated. Sayce argued plausibly that the word derives from the Hittite *iskallis*.[158] The earliest classical references to the institution are by Arcesilaus of Pitane, head of the Academy in the early third-century BC (cited in the epigraph to this section),[159] and Callimachus, whose fragment is the earliest known effort to write in galliambics (the metre of Catullus 63 and Maecenas' imitation), believed to be an imitation or calque on the rhythms of Phrygian dance: γάλλαι μητρὸς ὀρείης φιλόθυρσοι δρομάδες, αἷς ἔντεα παταγεῖται καὶ χάλκεα κρόταλα.[160] Both early references thus highlight the motif of sexual

[156] Cf. the paroemiographic entries s.v. γαλλιστὶ τεμεῖν cited in n. 130. LSJ[9] s.v. γαλλιστί makes an effort to be jolly here, and translates 'cut the Gordian knot'; but the expression literally means 'to slice like a Gallus', i.e. without much reckoning of the consequences.

[157] To judge from *Med.* 7.19, a practitioner such as Celsus would have been perfectly capable of performing such an operation; Hadrian's rescript assumes that slaves will have been castrated by a doctor (see below). In such cases, total ablation will have been a serious possibility, since the risk of the patient bleeding to death would have been much smaller. From the time of Domitian (Suetonius, *Dom.* 7; *Dig.* 48.8.6, ?AD 83), however, there were several imperial rescripts forbidding the practice; Hadrian indeed treated it as a form of murder (*Dig.* 48.8.4.2), cf. A. Watson, *Roman Slave Law* (Baltimore and London 1987) 122f. No doubt however the castration of the *galli* fell, as in the case of the Jews, under the rubric *cuius regio, eius superstitio*, formulated, though of course not in those words, by Antoninus Pius (ap. *Dig.* 12.2.5.1).

[158] H.A. Sayce, Kybele and Gallos in the Hittite Texts, *CR* 42 (1928) 161–63, followed by Walde-Hofmann s.v. gallus, 2 (1 p. 581). Greek etymological dictionaries assume a foreign origin: Boisacq and Frisk omit the word entirely, clearly because for them it was a loan-word; cf. Chantraine s.v. (1 p. 208).

[159] Note however the reservations expressed by Borgeaud 1996, 215 n. 43 = 2004, 161 n. 43. I see no reason myself to doubt the tradition; given his theory about the Gauls, Borgeaud has every reason to doubt the ascription of the joke to Arcesilaus.

[160] 'Fleeting-running Gallai of the mountain-Mother, lovers of the thyrsus, whose instruments and bronze finger-clappers fill the air with their noise', frg. 761 inc. auct. Pfeiffer = *frag. adesp. Alex.* 9 (2.6, p. 213 Diehl[2]). The ascription of the lines to Callimachus has rightly been defended by A. Dale, Galliambics by Callimachus, *CQ* 57 (2007) 775–81 against the arguments of D. Mulroy, Hephaestion and Catullus 63, *Phoenix* 30 (1976) 61–72 and E. Courtney, Three Poems by Catullus, *BICS* 32 (1985) 90f. As Pfeiffer notes, Catullus picks up the deliberate shift of gender of γάλλαι in 63.12 etc. The apparent gender of φιλόθυρσοι heightens the ambiguity. Pfeiffer's commentary explores the complex intertextuality of the passage, cf. Euripides, *Helen* 1301f., where the crasis of Cybele-Demeter-Dionysus already occurs, with Kannicht's excellent commentary (2: 327–59). Baslez 2004, 242f. argues that the passage alludes to the fact that in Phrygia the ecstatic whirling dance of the *galli* was also practised by women.

ambiguity. The usual ancient explanation was that the name derived from the river on whose banks Attis emasculated himself:[161] according to Alexander Polyhistor, in the first century BC, its name was Terias, but Attis (or rather Gallos) called it Γάλλος.[162] The vulgate, deriving from Callimachus, claimed that the waters of this river had the property of making one possessed.[163] Quite which river in this part of Anatolia was intended is an insoluble problem.[164] More recently however efforts have been made to revive Jerome's etymology, which connected it with the name of the Gauls, in Greek Γαλάται, who invaded Asia Minor under Leonnorius and Lutarius in 278 BC and spent years plundering Seleucid territory even after their defeat at the 'Battle of the Elephants' in c. 268.[165] Both E.N. Lane and Philippe Borgeaud have argued in favour of linking the Gauls' invasion, the name of the river Gallus and the sacerdotal term.[166] Borgeaud in particular has stressed the analogies between the rough priests of the Great Mother and the comportment of the Gauls in battle (Livy 38.17.4), which will not have been lost on

[161] Cf. *Appendix proverbiorum* 1 §67 (*CPG* 1 p. 389) s.v. γαλλιστὶ τεμεῖν: γάλλοι καλοῦνται οἱ ἀποτετμήμενοι, ἢ ἀπὸ Γάλλου τοῦ ποταμοῦ…; Macarius 2 §92 (*CPG* 2 p. 152f.). This etymology was accepted straightforwardly by Ernout-Meillet s.v. *gallus* (2) in ed.[1] (1932) 392, but in ed.[2] it is distanced: "Les Latins le dérivent…' p. 267.

[162] Alexander Polyhistor, *FGrH* 273 F74 (from the Description of Phrygia, Bk 3): καὶ ὅτι τὸν Γάλλον καὶ τὸν Ἄττιν ἀποκόψαι τὰ αἰδοῖα, καὶ τὸν μὲν Γάλλον ἐλθεῖν ἐπὶ τὸν Τηρίαν ποταμὸν καὶ οἰκῆσαι καὶ τὸν ποταμὸν Γάλλον καλέσαι· ἀπ' ἐκείνου γὰρ τοὺς τεμνομένους τὰ αἰδοῖα γάλλους καλοῦσιν. On the problem of this other person named Gallos, whom Julian, *Or.* 5.165b evidently identified or muddled up with Attis, see Jacoby ad loc. (3A Komm. p. 285), citing the (fictitious) Cappadocian king-list ap. Diodorus Sic. 31.19 = Photius, 382a30 Bekker = vol. 6 p. 141 Henry, where Gallus is the son of Queen Atossa and Pharnaces of Cappadocia.

[163] Callimachus, Περὶ θαυμασίων (frg. 411 Pfeiffer), from Pliny, *HN* 31.9; cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 4.363f.

[164] It is simplest to consult the *RE* entries s.v. Gallos nos. 1–3, with Barrington, maps 62, F5 and G3; and 86, A3; also Cumont 1912, 674f.

[165] Jerome, *In Osee* 1.4.14, p. 44 Adriaen (CCSL 76): *Hi sunt quos hodie Romae matri… servientes, Gallos, vocant, eo quod de hac gente Romani truncatos libidine… sacerdotes illius manciparint. Propterea autem Gallorum gentis homines effeminantur, ut qui urbem Romani ceperant, hac feriantur ignominia.* On the date (traditionally 277 BC), see M. Wörrle, Antiochos I., Achaios der Ältere und die Galater: Eine neue Inschrift in Denizli, *Chiron* 5 (1975) 59–87; E. Will, *Histoire politique du monde hellénistique, I* (Nancy 1979) 143f.; Mitchell 1993, 18. Mommsen 1889, 1: 869: "und wenn auch die Regierung noch (in 205 BC) streng darauf hielt, daß die Castratenpriester der neuen Götter Kelten (*Galli*), wie sie hießen, auch blieben".

[166] E.N. Lane, The Name of Cybele's priests, the Galloi, in idem 1996, 117–33; Borgeaud 1996, 119f. (= 2004, 80–2).

Roman readers.[167] However Cumont was surely right to point out that the word is only found in Greek after the establishment of the Seleucid Empire had made access to the temple-state of Pessinus practicable, despite the facts that a) the cult of the Great Mother (or forms of it) was known in Greece considerably earlier, and b) as was already assumed in antiquity, it must be calqued upon a Phrygian word.[168] It seems impossible to connect Greek Γαλάται with γάλλοι; it is only in Latin that there could be a play on the words *Gallus*, Gaul, and *gallus*, rooster, and so a nudge towards the notion of 'capon' (*caper*).[169]

Although Borgeaud concludes from this that the Greek word γάλλος must be a borrowing from the Latin *gallus* after the arrival of the Galatians in Asia Minor (1996, 121 = 2004, 81), the more natural conclusion is that self-emasculation was a Phrygian institution prior to the arrival of the Tolistobogii in the region of Pessinus around 266.[170] The temple

[167] Although he rejects the idea that the Mater Magna might have been considered Gaulish (p. 120f. = 2004, 81f.), he does wonder whether the Gauls might not have been disposed to worship Cybele in Anatolia because they had known the Μήτηρ θεῶν, an Archaic version of the same goddess, in the neighbourhood of Massilia (p. 121 = 2004, 82). We may note that the image of the Gauls as tall, hairy, uncivilised brutes belongs to literary stereotype and has nothing to do with reality, cf. Darbyshire et al. 2000; S. Mitchell ap. Erskine 2003, 280–93.

[168] Cumont 1912, 675. Casaubon was already of this opinion: "asiatica enim vox est, quae τὸν ἀπόκοπον significat, neque a Galliae populis ea notio manavit" (ed. Lampridius, Heliog. 7, p. 806; cited by Lobeck 1829, 659 n.a [on p. 660]). Hesychius defines the probably related word γάλλαρος as Φρυγιακὸν ὄνομα (1 p. 361 Latte); it occurs in two Greek inscriptions in the sense 'Dionysiac initiate': G. Dunst, Γάλλαροι, *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Sprachforschung* 78 (1963) 147–53; cf. LSJ[9] Suppl. p. 33. There exists a slight possibility, however, that it is after all Greek: there was an Aeolic form of the word ἦλος, nail-head, spelled with a gamma, γάλλοι (pl.) (Hesychius s.v.); the word had a second meaning, 'wart', 'callus'. The word γάλλος might therefore have originated as a derogatory reference in that area of Greek settlement to the castration-scar, and thence, by synecdoche, applied to the men who did this to themselves.

[169] Walde-Hofmann s.v. *gallus*, 1 (1 p. 580f.) assume that the Latin word is a borrowing "aus einer vorasiatischen Sprache", citing Gk κάλλαιον, cock's comb; καλλαΐς, hen, and therefore unrelated to the word for a Gaul. Ernout-Meillet s.v. *gallus*, 1 (p. 266) do toy—unconvincingly—with that idea (citing Gk. μῆδος, περσικόν) but prefer onomatopoeia. The best-known example is the modius of the archigallus of Ostia M. Modius Maxximus (sic), now in the Vatican Museums: *CIL* XIV 385 = *ILS* 4162 = *CCCA* 3: 123f. no. 395 pl. CCXLV = *AE* 1998: 275a,b = Rieger 2004, 146f. no. MM2 with figs. 119a,b; cf. Vermaseren 1977 pl. 64 (late II^{p}–early III^{p}). We may perhaps take it that the Romans took a certain satisfaction in turning their former conquerors into capons. For Maxximus, however, there can have been no such joke: in his case the rooster is a mere rebus.

[170] Cf. Giammarco Razzano 1982. On the Tolistobogii, cf. Mitchell 1993, 55–58; K. Strobel, *Die Galater: Geschichte und Eigenart der keltischen Staatenbildung auf dem Boden des hellenistischen Kleinasien, 1* (Berlin 1996) 252–57; Darbyshire et al. 2000, 79. The Greeks

after all was reputed to have built by King Midas (Diod. Sic. 3.59.8). Two opposing accounts have been offered. One, exemplified by Frazer, is that the practice was an established ritual requirement which was then legitimated by the story of the self-castration of Attis.[171] There is also an Euhemerist version, which assumes the divinisation of an actual human-being who had indeed castrated himself.[172] The alternative is that the fantasy preceded the institution: once the myth exists, people will start living it out. The vulgate assumes a model according to which the followers of Attis fell into a frenzy by drinking the waters of the river Gallus, just as Attis is said to have been frenzied (μανείς) when he castrated himself.[173] The theme is picked up by the Apologists, in the context of their hostile and highly implausible theories of the meaning of self-castration.[174]

None of these options seems very attractive. Thanks to recent work, we are now in a better position to understand the significance and persistence of the self-gelding of the Galli in the cultural context of the

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had of course long been familiar with the emasculate Megabyzus, the high-priest of Artemis of Ephesus.

[171] Frazer 1914, 1: 265: "The story of the self-mutilation of Attis is clearly an attempt to account for the self-mutilation of his priests". The discussion of Loisy 1930, 93 focuses even more on raising doubts about the origin and original purpose of the self-mutilation.

[172] This sort of approach is surprisingly common in the wilder regions of scholarship, particularly in the case of Adonis. For example, Gottfried von Lücken, *Beiträge zu Geschichte, Kultur und Religion des Alten Orients* (Baden-Baden 1971) 177–79, claimed that the son of the 10th cent. King Elibaal of Byblos, named Adonis, was the historical basis of the legend of the lover of Cybele. Sergio Ribichini, *Adonis. Aspetti 'orientali' di un mito greco*. Centro di Studio per la Civiltà Fenicia e Punica (Rome 1981) rightly makes the point that, even if this were true, it would not help us to understand Adonis' religious and cultural significance. He does not however make the point about euhemerism being alive and well. In the case of Attis, the historical candidate is the son of another King, Midas (Frazer 1914, 1: 286). Lancellotti 2002, 16–60 revives this theory in a different guise.

[173] River water: Ovid, *Fasti* 4.361–66 with Bömer 2: 223; Festus, *De verb.sign*. s.v. Galli, p. 84.26f. Lindsay: *dicti sunt a flumine, cui nomen est Gallo; quia qui ex eo biberint, in hoc furere incipiant, ut se privent virilitatis parte*; cf. Herodian 1.11.2 etc.; Attis in a frenzy: Pausanias 7.17.12; cf. Julian, *Or*. 5, 167d with Ugenti ad loc. (p. 81); Arnobius, *Adv. nat*. 5.7 (= Sanzi 2003, 281, Cybele no. 39.3): *furiarum et ipse iam plenus, perbacchatus iactatus proicit se tandem et sub pini arbore genitalia sibi desecat*. There were also euhemerist versions in which Cybele herself goes mad: Diod. Sic. 3.59.1; Firmicus Maternus, *De errore* 3.1 (with Turcan ad loc., p. 190); *Vat. Myth*. 1.225 Dain (jealousy); 3.28 Zorzetti-Berlioz (hatred).

[174] Cf. Sanders, 1978; also 1972, 1015–24.

Roman empire.[175] In the previous chapter I emphasised some aspects which will have contributed to understanding the underlying assumptions of the myth in this connection; but here we can enlarge the scope of the enquiry and attempt to locate it within the entire complex of the paradigm castrating-mother/boy-lover.[176] The *galli* formed a specialised group in the service of the Great Mother, a group of priests whose self-gelding was rewarded by their control over the cult.[177] Excision of their genitals was an indispensable condition for this privilege. It was also a sign of their exclusive devotion to the cult of the Mother. In other words, renunciation of their physical integrity involved renunciation of

[175] Note the good survey of previous positions, and their intellectual backgrounds, in Södergard 1993. There has been a good deal of useful historical work on different aspects of the phenomenon, e.g. K. Hopkins, The Political Power of Eunuchs, in *Conquerors and Slaves* (Cambridge 1974) 172–96 (orig. 1963); P. Guyot, *Eunuchen als Sklaven und Freigelassene in der griechische-römischen Antike*. Stuttgarter Beiträge 14 (Stuttgart 1980); S. Nanda, *Neither Man nor Woman: The* hijra *of India* (New York 1990); S. Marmon, *Eunuchs and Sacred Boundaries in Islamic Society* (Oxford 1995); S.H. Thai, *The Eunuchs in the Ming Dynasty* (New York 1996); P. Scholz, *Eunuchs and Castrati: A Cultural History* (Princeton 2001); M.S. Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Chicago 2001); K. Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in the Byzantine Empire* (Chicago 2003).

[176] I am attracted by the idea of working Borgeaud's Freudian reading (2004, 100f.) into an historical account. I also subscribe to his view that the castrated status of the *galli* was essential to the religious meaning of the institution. Marie-Françoise Baslez has however argued on the basis of the Hellenistic evidence that the Anatolian *galli* were not necessarily castrated: their primary role, parallel to shamanic and near-eastern (specifically Hittite) frenetic dancing, was to utter prophecies by dancing, or whirling, themselves into a trance. It is only the later (Roman) sources that harp on the motif of castration (Baslez 2004, 243–5). I find this quite unconvincing: it is not at all clear that the Hellenistic epigrams she cites (many of them much later than she claims) are any less 'literary', viz. based on selected elements of a complex ritual actuality, than the Roman "stéréotypes caricaturaux" she deplores. Moreover, she completely ignores the wider motif of blood-letting, which is central to the specific symbolic role of the *galli* under the Principate. Her sub-title 'Images et réalités' spuriously implies that we can get 'behind' the play of claims and representations to an historical 'truth'.

[177] I use the word 'priests' here loosely, since the *galli* held no official title. Thomas, 1984 has argued that they were not 'priests'; Södergard 1993, 174 prefers to call them 'cultic personnel' in order to avoid the Christian connotations of 'priest'. It is true that Pliny uses the word *sacerdotes* at *HN* 35.165 (see n. 144 above); but Schillinger 1979, 345 n. 2, is surely right to distinguish between those cities, such as Herculaneum, where there was an official cult of the Mater Magna, and thus official civic *sacerdotes*, and the loose use of *sacerdos*, "dem pneumatischen Priesterbegriff des Ostens entsprechend…ohne dabei einen öffentlichen Status zu besitzen. Aus dem Titel sacerdos allein läßt sich nicht erkennen, mit welcher Art von Priestern wir es jeweils zu tun haben". He uses the term 'Berufskleriker' for the *galli*. I am not convinced by the view that understands the emasculation as a preparation for priesthood.

their 'proper' place in the social order.[178] In Pessinus and elsewhere in Mysia-Phrygia-Galatia this renunciation was compensated for by the high social evaluation of the choice. However, in Greek and Roman eyes, mutilation of their own bodies made it impossible for them to be accepted as normal members of the social group: classical conceptions of normative maleness meant indeed that the *gallus* was understood as a sort of slave.[179]

That being so, the myth of Cybele and Attis, apart from giving rise to a specific organisational structure, emphasised a destructive model of parent-child relations that can surely be explained with reference to the historical formation in which the myth was created. Of course we have no direct insight into its origins, since we only know it through the prism of the Greek and Latin authors, who in turn elaborated it in their own socio-cultural terms. In this new context, real and imaginary, the model played a decisive role in the construction of the *imaginaire* of the incest-taboo, thereby influencing behaviour in the context of mother-son relationships, both at the level of fantasy and that of real action. The model of the devouring mother, perpetuated in the societies that received the cult of Cybele, acquired dramatic expression in ritual; and that ritual performance could well on occasion have provoked its perversion, namely physical enactment.

It is thus not out of the question that the model inspired direct imitation on the part of individuals. As I have noted in relation to self-abasement in prayer, the cult certainly encouraged a sense of personal emotional dependence. If the goddess demanded castration as a condition for becoming a true servant, the imperative might be met by individuals who, given the appropriate economic, social and ideological conditions, were emotionally disposed to turn fantasy into reality. Ascetic mysticism, insistent music, hallucinogenic drugs, a suitable instrument—the combination might easily trigger such an act.[180]

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[178] Cf. B.-M. Näsström, *The Abhorrence of Love. Studies in Rituals and Mystic Aspects in Catullus' Poem of Attis* (Uppsala 1989) makes good use of Victor Turner on this point. However I find the substitution of the castration by a symbolic hierogamy unconvincing; I think that the Phrygian cults had both a hierogamy (as part of the initiation) and castration (marking one's permanent dedication to her service). See p. 280 below.

[179] Cf. Seneca, *de superstitione* (ap. Aug., *de civ. Dei* 6.10): *tam indecora honestis, tam indigna libris, tam dissimilia sanis, ut nemo fuerit dubitaturus furere eos, si cum paucioribus fuerunt*; also Bömer 1957–63, 4: 26.

[180] Södergard calls these the 'extrinsic' stimuli as opposed to the 'intrinsic', mainly the *imitatio Attidis* (1993, 188). In his view, such stimuli or motives produced effects both 'intrinsic' (such as the belief that one's sacrifice might make the earth fertile,

The worshipper loses his virility, as demanded by the devouring Mother, but preserves his selfhood, which is neither lost nor taken over. The son reacts before it is too late, and so escapes with his life. The Mother does not want to kill him, indeed she begs Zeus to preserve his life, but demands his sex and gets it. She thus gains a faithful servant, whose celibacy is irrevocable—no backsliding, no betrayal—and in return she grants him her everlasting divine protection. The model of Attis has achieved its effect.

At the same time, however, we can view the process historically. The cult of the Mater Magna was originally brought to Rome from outside; with it came a myth created in a quite different cultural milieu—hence the Romans' coolness towards it. Different interests were in play. The plebs' acceptance of the new cult offered a potential node of resistance to the aristocracy. For the latter, popular participation simply compounded the problem of the cult's outlandishness. On the other hand, Rome was not in a position to send Cybele back where she came from: she had entered the pomerium quite legally, had protected the city; Hannibal had been defeated. Since she, the goddess, had fulfilled her part of the bargain, the Romans could hardly renege on theirs. As a compromise, her right to prey upon young men was limited to a group of foreigners. The detested *galli* thus fulfilled a specific social role: thanks to them, the Romans escaped self-castration but enjoyed Cybele's protection. Rome may have scorned the *galli*, but she needed them; these new defenders of Rome were actually indispensable.

The ritual system in its broad lines, and thus (self-)castration, survived within the cult at Rome.[181] Some later versions suggest how the myth was re-interpreted in this new context. Lucretius writes:

> *gallos attribuunt, quia, numen qui violarint*
> *matris et ingrati genitoribus inventi sint*
> *significare volunt indignos esse putandos,*
> *vivam progeniem qui in oras luminis edant.*
>
> *de rerum natura* 2.614–17[182]

underwrite the growth-cycle, or guarantee ritual purity) and 'extrinsic' (such as marking boundaries, maintaining the integrity of the group, or meeting the demands of the castrating Mother).

[181] So much so that *gallus* comes to mean simply 'eunuch' (e.g. Martial 1.35.16, *gallo turpius est nihil Priapo*), a sense not listed by *OLD*; cf. Richard 1966.

[182] "They give her (Cybele) eunuchs as attendant-priests, to signify that those who have offended the Mother's godhead and shown ingratitude to their parents must

Here the self-gelding is read conventionally as a punishment for slighting the goddess and/or lack of filial piety.[183] By implication, the frenzy that led to the act is to be understood as sent directly by the deity in response to an offence against her. Clement of Alexandria cites a myth, albeit in connection with Zeus, who, in the shape of a bull, has raped Rhea/Deo, that seems to be a mythical elaboration of the same idea:

> The Phrygians celebrate these festivals in honour of Attis, Cybele and the Corybantes. They declare that Zeus tore off a ram's testicles, and threw them at Deo's breast (ὡς ἀποσπάσας ὁ Ζεὺς τοῦ κριοῦ τοὺς διδύμους φέρων ἐν μέσοις ἔρριψε τοῖς κόλποις τῆς Δηοῦς), pretending that they were his own (ὡς ἑαυτὸν δῆθεν ἐκτεμών), and that he was paying the penalty for raping her.[184]

It would be best not to press this passage too hard and read it, as is often done, as a direct mythical legitimation of a substitutive ritual involving the removal of a ram's testicles, elsewere known as the *criobolium*.[185] It does however introduce the idea of (self-inflicted) punishment. The passage thus goes beyond Lucretius in suggesting that one ancient reading of the significance of self-castration was to redeem oneself.[186] This in turn suggests a parallelism between self-castration and self-mutilation by means of the whip and double-bladed knives, also practised by the *galli*.[187] Given the familiarity of whipping as a punishment of slaves,

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be counted unworthy to bring forth living children into the sunlit world…" (tr. R.E. Latham, adapted).

[183] Cf. Summers 1996, 355–57.

[184] *Protrept.* 2.15 = Sanzi 2003, 266f. Cybele no. 29.1; cf. Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 77–82.

[185] So rightly Thomas 1984, 1523, against e.g. W. Schepelern, *Der Montanismus und die phrygische Kulte.* Habilschrift Copenhagen (Tübingen 1929) 116; Vermaseren 1977, 105; on the context, see Borgeaud 1998, 190–4; 2004, 114–17. It seems obvious that the myth is linked to the widespread theme of self-castration to avoid false accusation, the so-called Kombabos-theme (Lucian, *De dea Syria* 19–27 with Lightfoot 2003, 384–402).

[186] Against Meslin 1985, 181, I doubt that voluntary self-castration was linked to hierogamy, i.e. sacred marriage (cf. Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 81). According to Clement, the hierogamy took place after initiation (see p. 000 below), when the *mystes* was still capable of reproduction. Self-castration was notoriously linked to sexual inversion; as a sign of radical change and a return, with the deity, to primal unity, it confirmed the subject's status as servant.

[187] μάστιν τὰν πολυαστράγαλον, i.e. with knuckle-bones plaited into the thongs: Erycius (?late I^{P}), *Anth.Pal.* 6.234 = *Garland*, Erucius no. x l. 4 (on the correct spelling of the name, see *Garland* 2: 278); Plutarch, *Adv. Coloten* 33, 1127c; cf. *latus horreat flagello*: Maecenas, frg. 5 Baehrens = 6 Lunderstedt = 5 Courtney; knives: Apuleius, *Met.* 8.27 (composite fiction drawing on the *galli* and *bellonarii*).

and of criminals before their execution, this can hardly have failed to be understood as a form of punishment, and is indeed explicitly taken as such by Apuleius.[188]

I have already pointed out that renunciation of their physical integrity by the *galli* involved renunciation of one's 'proper' place in the social order. The idea of corporal punishment expresses one aspect of this renunciation—of one's own free will subjecting oneself to slave-punishment.[189] Another is cross-dressing, by assuming the saffron *stola*, and wearing make-up, prominent ornaments, pendants, ear-rings, and finger-rings. This rejection of the masculine norm is linked directly, as we have already seen, to the repeated claim that by castrating themselves these adherents of Cybele (and other *galli*) have become male pseudo-women, i.e. catamites.[190] Lucian reports that the *galli* in the temple of Atargatis at Hierapolis wore female clothing and did women's work; they 'feminised' (θηλύνονται), allegedly in imitation of Kombabos, who in this case was upset because a woman who was vainly besotted with him had killed herself (*De dea Syria* 27).[191] Such explicit effeminisation calls attention to the rejection of this-worldly gender-classification, and all that goes with it—marrying to continue the household, having a fixed abode, working for a living. Failure to work for a living and the rejection of a roof over one's head were the hall-marks of the notorious μητραγύρται in Classical and Hellenistic Greece, who, constantly on the move, lived off what they could beg from locals. In Latin they were known as *famuli*; Cicero calls for them to be licenced for particular

[188] *Met.* 8.28: *quasi contra fas sanctae religionis dissignasset aliquid, et insuper iustas poenas noxii facinoris ipse de se suis manibus exposcere* (the speaker goes on to whip himself). On whipping as a punishment of slaves, cf. Plautus, *Persa* 282; Horace, *Epod.* 4.3; criminals (including condemned slaves): F. Hinard and J.-C. Dumont (eds.), *Libitina: Pompes funèbres et supplices en Campanie à l'époque d'Auguste* (Paris 2003) 118.

[189] Seneca, *de superstitione* (ap. Aug., *de civ. Dei* 6.10) suggests that the blood was understood as a *supplicatio*, a propitiatory offering: *se ipsi in templis contrucidant, vulneribus suis ac sanguine supplicant*.

[190] Vermaseren 1977, 97; on cross-dressing, see Beard 1994. On the uses and meanings of different colours in make-up, see J. Alvar and T. de la Vega, La ambigüedad cromática en los misterios, in P. Ortega, M.J. Rodríguez y C.G. Wagner (eds.), *Mujer, ideología y población. II Jornadas de roles sexuales y de género*, Serie ARYS 11 (Madrid 2000) 49–60.

[191] θηλυνόμενος inevitably also had a sexual connotation, e.g. Vettius Valens, *Anthol.* p. 7.26; 10.19; 12.1 Kroll. *De dea Syria* also mentions (§52) that the Hierapolitan *galli* were buried under tumuli of stones outside the walls—they have 'lost' their connection to their birth-families, and require a special form of 'unnatural' burial; some oddly unperceptive remarks in this connection by Lightfoot 2003, 509f. Baslez 2004, 236 insists upon the fact that the Phrygian *galli* allowed their hair to grow long.

days, no doubt in order to prevent their indiscriminate multiplication.[192] To judge from literary sources, however, they were a familiar sight on the open road.[193] All of these differences assert membership in an ideal society where the rules are quite simply different from those of the dominant world; and explain the odd mixture of horror and fascination that the *galli* provoked in the minds of their contemporaries. We cannot even guess at the proportion of male Metroac worshippers who may have gelded themselves: slaves were not free to do so; the separation from the ordinary world of work and achievement was so radical that we can hardly imagine many freedmen taking such a step. Perhaps most were always indigenous Phrygians, born into a culture where the practice may have had a higher social valuation.[194] Yet the existence of even a few monuments that seem to represent such men, for example at Ostia, implies that some at least were relatively prosperous, and had not severed their ties with the normal world. For them the ideal society was ideational, not literal.

It is this membership in an ideal society that is connoted by the occasional representation of the *cista mystica* in the context of the galli. One such basket is depicted apparently hanging from a nail on a (temple-) wall represented beside the full-dress *gallus* on a well-known relief from Lanuvium.[195] A similar *cista* is also once depicted at Attis' self-emasculation.[196] For what it is worth, the scholiast to Clement's account of the 'mysteries of Deo' claims that Attis' genitals were placed

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[192] Cicero, *Laws* 2.22: *praeter Idaeae matris famulos eosque iustis diebus ne quis stipem cogito*; cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 4.350–2 Alton-Wormall-Courtney: *'Dic', inquam 'parva cur stipe quaerat opes.' 'Contulit aes populus, de quo delubra Metellus fecit' ait; 'Dandae mos stipis inde manet'.*

[193] E.g. Martial 3.91.2: a veteran *semiviro Cybeles cum grege iunxit iter*; cf. Apuleius, *Met.* 8.26.

[194] And perhaps therefore castrated as children (see n. 157 above). Lancellotti 2002, 98f. however urges that the operation was confined to adults rather than pre-adolescents.

[195] *CCCA* 3: 152f. no. 466, pls. CCXCVI–VII = Cumont 1929, pl. II.1 = Helbig^4 2: 25f. no. 1176 (Capitoline Museum inv. no. 1207, perhaps mid-II^P). It is uncertain whether the association between *cista mystica* and the Archigallus (that of M. Modius Maxximus [see n. 169 above] and on the sarcophagus found at Isola Sacra [*CCCA* 3:140f. no. 446]) evokes their self-gelding, their link with the *galli* or their initiation.

[196] Cf. the hexagonal floor-stone from an unknown provenance in Gaul, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, *CCCA* 5: 157f. no. 465, where the *cista* stands at the bottom of the scene, with Attis above (some doubt must however attach to the authenticity). It must however be said that the many altars that set out the symbols and instruments associated with the taurobolium, such as the series from Die (*CCCA* 5: 122f. nos. 359–64), do not include the *cista*. This perhaps indicates that the ritual was not understood as an initiation.

in a *cista*.[197] This may be confirmed by the *defixio* from Mogontiacum (Mainz), mentioned in Chapter 2.1.b above, which associates Attis with Castor and Pollux and the *cistae penetrales*, "containers kept within (the temple)".[198] The expression occurs nowhere else as such in the context of Metroac cult, but was evidently perfectly familiar in Mainz.[199] If we stress the connection with Attis, the phrase might be used to support the idea that such containers mainly connoted the god's self-gelding and death, and hence the *galli*. Whatever their precise contents, however, they seem clearly to evoke the idea that self-gelding was 'mystery', a privileged means of gaining access to the goddess.

c. *The* taurobolium/criobolium

Along with self-castration, the *taurobolium/criobolium* is the most striking ritual component of the Phrygian cult.[200] Traditionally, however, it has received a bad press.[201] This is largely due to the Christian poet

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[197] Σ Clement Alex. *Protr.* 2.19 = Hepding 1903, 32. This is however not confirmed by any epigraphic source.

[198] *AE* 2004: 1026, with Blänsdorf 2004, 56; 2005, 680 no. 201 B36.

[199] Note also the sequence, unfortunately garbled, in another of these texts: *quomodo galli se secarent… quomodo et sacrorum* (?) *deposierunt* (i.e. the *galli*) *in sancto, sic et tuam vitam (et) valetudinem, Gemella*: Blänsdorf 2005, 678 no. 72, 3 = 2008 no. 17 ll. 6–11. For *per cistas penetrales*, cf. Apuleius, *Met.* 6.2: *perego te frugiferam tuam dexteram istam deprecor, per laetificas messium caerimonias, per tacita secreta cistarum…* (Psyche to Demeter/Ceres). A problematic passage in *HA Elagab*. 7.2 claims that Antoninus danced ecstatically like the *galli*, and *genitalia sibi devinxit et omnia fecit quae Galli facere solent, ablatumque sanctum in penetrale dei sui transtulit*. Despite the grammatical mistake (*genitalia… ablatum*), the thought seems to be that it was his severed genitals that were placed in the shrine of Sol invictus Elagabalus, in the same way as the *galli* placed theirs in the shrine of Mater Magna. (D. Magie in the Loeb edition takes *ablatum* to be a reference to the statue of Cybele *et alia sacra quae penitus habentur condita* mentioned in the previous sentence, which seems rather forced.) The accusation must be nonsense (so too Schillinger 1979, 391f.), since Varius Avitus was already castrated; but it implies that Marius Maximus knew where the genitals of the *galli* were in fact dedicated, or that it was common knowledge (on the Life, see Barnes 1970, 30f.).

[200] In what follows, I sometimes speak of the *taurobolium* alone; in these cases it should be understood that I am also referring, *mutatis mutandis*, to the *criobolium*. As far as is known, the only major difference between them was the cost of the animal and the number of people its meat could feed. In both cases the sacramental element was the ritual handling of the animal's severed scrotum, the *vires*, in an evident reference to Attis' self-castration. Borgeaud 1998 (which complements his account in 2004, 110–19) is a useful recent discussion of the issues.

[201] Cumont 1929, 67 is typical: "Le taurobole, qui cherche à satisfaire les aspirations les plus élevées de l'homme vers la purification spirituelle et l'immortalité, apparaît comme une douche de sang qui fait songer à quelque orgie de cannibales". A brief survey of opinions in Marco Simón 1997, 310f. nn. 41f.

Prudentius' account, at the very end of the fourth century AD, of a supposed ritual that takes place at Rome: a *summus sacerdos* stands in a hole beneath a timber-grid and is showered with the blood of a bull, whose thorax has been pierced by a spear, the *venabulum*.[202] This account is spoken—miraculously—by the Antiochene deacon-martyr Romanus after his tongue has been cut out by the executioner: blood is therefore literally all about. Romanus' claim was supposedly supported by passages in the contemporary Christian vilification of pagan practice, the *Carmen contra paganos* and Firmicus Maternus.[203] In the late 1940s the Dutch scholar K.H.E. de Jong produced an imaginative drawing of Prudentius' shower-bath, reprinted by Vermaseren in 1977 as a more or less authentic reconstruction of the event.[204] Although everyone allowed that this 'evidence' was rather late, it was still accepted as reliable, as a historical fact, and fitted into an evolutionary scheme of the rite by the two most important discussions of the *taurobolium* of the late nineteen-sixties, by Jeremy Rutter and Robert Duthoy.[205] What Cumont considered a primeval rite was thus transformed into the third stage of a long historical development and associated with the late-antique dedications, mainly by members of the so-called 'pagan reaction', in the sanctuary of the Phrygianum on the Vatican.

All this however wonderfully illustrates the dangers of working from excerpts and unfamiliar sources. Recent work on the *Peristephanon*,

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[202] Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 10.1011–50. As Rutter 1968, 240 allowed, Prudentius nowhere mentions the word 'taurobolium', but this has not dented confidence in the authenticity of the claim.

[203] *Carmen contra paganos* 57–62 (see the ed. and tr. by C. Markschies ap. R. Feldmeier and U. Heckel (eds.), *Die Heiden: Juden, Christen und das Problem des Fremden* [Tübingen 1994] 325–77; also Martínez Maza 2000, 66–75). This brief confection of course is not a source 'independent' of Prudentius, even if it is not by him—it is actually transmitted as part of his corpus (cod. Par. Lat. 8084, fols.156^{r}–158^{v}). Cf. also Firmicus Maternus, *De errore* 27.8–28.1. J.M. Poinsotte, La présence de poèmes anti-païens anaonymes dans l'oeuvre de Prudence, *REAug* 28 (1982) 35–58 suggested that Prudentius was elaborating on these lines of the *Carmen*.

[204] K.H.E. de Jong, *Oosters-hellenistische Mysteriën* (The Hague 1949) 86 = Vermaseren 1977, 104 fig. 30 = Turcan 1992a, 56 fig. 1. See also the first edition of the present book, p. 199 fig. 47. Such images, albeit frankly reconstructions, have a reificatory power not dissimilar to that of 'documentary' photos or scientific drawings.

[205] Rutter 1968; Duthoy 1969; cf. Burkert 1979, 119 and 1987, 98 (a fact); Vermaseren 1977, 101–7 (perhaps a fact); Turcan 1992a, 55–58; still quite uncritical, Sanzi 2006, 168 n. 190. Acceptance of the historicity of the passage goes back to Graillot 1912, 153–74, and indeed beyond. Duthoy's book received a devastating review by T.D. Barnes, *Gnomon* 43 (1971) 523f.; even before it appeared, Duthoy himself had expressed some doubts about his sequence: Traces archéologiques de tauroboles à Zadar, *Latomus* 27 (1968) 622–9 at 623–5; cf. Richard 1969, 666–8.

and the Romanus section in particular, has suggested that its account of supposed pagan practice has no pretension whatever to historical accuracy or authenticity, and is intended merely as a foil to the martyrological *topoi*.[206] The shedding of the martyr's blood, and his rhetorical defence of the Christian faith, are the poem's two central themes.[207] Largely independent of this growing awareness among scholars of early Christianity of the Tendenz of Prudentius' poem, Neil McLynn has brilliantly exposed the weaknesses of the Rutter/Duthoy scheme, emphasizing that Prudentius otherwise shows very little knowledge of paganism (he only knows the stock themes, the apologetic clichés); that the *Carmen* and Firmicus Maternus do not support the shower of blood, or any similar detail; that the 'description' fits all too neatly with the rhetorical and thematic needs of the moment, after more than a thousand lines of rhodomontade; and that the fourth-century *taurobolium* was a private occasion that the altars and inscriptions turn into a highly public, celebratory event (McLynn 1996).[208]

McLynn's arguments can in fact be supported, at least in a negative sense, by looking at the archaeological evidence.[209] An important prop to the Prudentian scenario—granted that it was the Prudentius passage which inspired its identification as a "fossa sanguinis" (the term is modern) in the first place—used to be a pit that Guido Calza discovered in the tower of the Sullan wall to the south of the temple of Bellona during the course of his re-excavation of the precinct of the Mater Magna at Ostia. Anna-Katharina Rieger has now shown conclusively that this 'pit', which was in a stuccoed room (hardly suitable for a butcher's shop), was partly vaulted, and that the small, square entrance could be covered with (a) board(s). The 'pit' was deliberately built so as to extend almost to the water-table, which at this point is

[206] J.F. Petruccione, *Prudentius' Use of Martyrological Topoi in Peristephanon* (Ann Arbor 1985); R. Henke, Der Romanushymnus des Peristephanon, *JfAC* 29 (1986) 59–65; A.-M. Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs* (Oxford 1989); M. Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs: the Liber Peristephanon of Prudentius* (Ann Arbor 1993).

[207] W. Evenepoel, Le martyr dans le Liber peristephanon de Prudence, *Sacris Erudiri: Jaarboek voor Godsdienstwetenschappen* 36 (1996) 5–35.

[208] Borgeaud 1996, 167 = 2004, 117f. came to the same conclusion at the same time, albeit without the same range of argument; cf. Rieger 2004, 112. At the international conference *Les 'religions orientales' dans le monde grec et romain: cent ans après Cumont (1906–2006)*, Rome, 16–18 November 2006, Mary Beard followed up McLynn's critique with an analysis of the role played by the shedding of blood in *Peristephanon* 10 (to appear in Bonnet, Pirenne-Delforge and Praet 2009).

[209] Rather oddly, McLynn himself fails to mention this issue.

rather high, and must therefore have constantly filled with water. She concludes that it was simply a cistern used to fill the various basins that are scattered around the precinct, notably beside the steps of the temple of Mater Magna. The flight of steps into the cistern were intended simply to make it easier to collect water.[210] Inspired by Calza, H. von Petrikovits interpreted a cellar with two flights of steps found at Gepaplatz 3, Neuss-Gnadental in Nordrhein-Westf. (Roman Novaesium) as a "fossa sanguinis". There can be little doubt that this cellar was in, or near, some sort of sacred area in the SW corner of the *vicus* of the auxiliary fort. However the only temples found were those dedicated to Jupiter and the Matronae.[211] No reliable evidence of a connection to Mater Magna could be found, and Elmar Schwertheim has rightly commented: "Diese Anzeichen . . . sind . . . keineswegs zwingend" (1974, 9 no. 5). The supposedly independent archaeological confirmation of the Prudentian scenario thus dissolves.

The most important aspect of this demonstration, combined with earlier criticisms of the evolutionary scheme, is that we need no longer believe that there were any major shifts (other than local variation) in the Metroac version of the *taurobolium/criobolium* once its ritual pattern had been established in the mid-second century AD. We need simply accept that, once the ceremony entered the cult's ritual-system, it formed an organic part of it.

On the other hand, the adoption of the *taurobolium/criobolium* as a Metroac ritual implies that similar modes were already available within the spectrum of rites known in the Empire, so that we do not necessarily have to recognise a taurobolic ritual behind every occurrence of the word or every image of a bull. This has long since been established for Anatolia, where various forms of non-Metroac ταυροβόλια are known.[212] We should thus be wary of interpreting some altars listed in the relevant corpora as Metroac rather than as evidence for some restricted indigenous ritual: I am thinking, for example, of two reliefs

[210] Calza 1946, 186; 197f.; Rieger 2004, 110–12 with figs. 82–83b. She also dates its construction to the late I^{p}, which is far too early for the Prudentian scenario of the Rutter/Duthoy hypothesis. Calza 1946, 196f. himself dated it II^{p}, to Rutter's discomfort.

[211] Photo and brief discussion in H.-G. Horn (ed.), *Die Römer in Nordrhein-Westfalen* (Stuttgart 1987) 588f.

[212] "The *taurobólion* is a ritual preserving elements of bull-hunting": Burkert 1979, 119. Some of the Anatolian evidence regarding non-Metroac κριοβόλια (ephebes catching rams and sacrificing them, e.g. *OGIS* 764 l. 27f.) and ταυροβόλια (e.g. *IGR* 4.494 etc., *TAM* 2.508, *SEG* 2: 727 = *AE* 2003: 1748 with L. Robert, *Les gladiateurs dans l'Orient grec* [Paris 1940] 316–18) is presented by Rutter 1968, 226–29.

found at Sos del Rey Católico, prov. Saragosa, which seem rather to be connected with an ancient pre-Roman cult.[213]

It is generally believed that the first Metroac *taurobolia* were performed under Antoninus Pius (AD 138–61).[214] The earliest surviving epigraphic evidence (though we do not have to assume, with Beaujeu, that it was in very fact also the first)[215] relates to a sacrifice undertaken in AD 160 at the goddess' behest for the elderly Antoninus Pius, his children and the colonia Claudia Lugdunensis in or at the *vaticanum*.[216] The spot is clearly named from the site in Rome of the same name.[217] Specific reference is made to the new, or newly-reinforced, rules for the appointment of local municipal priests of Mater Magna.[218] Presumably the noble exta

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[213] *CCCA* 5: 77f. nos. 211f. ("possibly a *taurobolium* monument"); also those described by C. Aguarod and A. Mostalac, Nuevos hallazgos de aras taurobólicas en la provincia de Zaragoza, *Homenaje Almagro*, 3 (Madrid 1983) 311–329; cf. Alvar 1993c, 39f.; J.F. Ubiña, Mater magna, Cybele and Attis in Roman Spain, in Lane 1996, 405–33 at 417. I do not find Marco Simón's case for linking the Sos del Rey Católico monument to Cybele convincing (Marco Simón 1997, 306–10).

[214] I accept Rutter's case (1968, 231f.) for regarding *CIL* X 1596 = *ILS* 4371 = Duthoy 1969, 29 no. 50 = *CCCA* 4: 8 no. 11 (7 Oct. AD 134), from Puteoli, as essentially an eastern Mediterranean ceremony (it is directed to Venus Caelestis).

[215] The casual reference to the local *vaticanum* suggests a familiar ceremony. If it had been the first, we would have expected some explicit notice of the fact; Pompeia Philumene, for example, states that she was the first woman (*prima*) to celebrate a *taurobolium* at Lactora/Lectoure (*CIL* XIII 504 = *ILS* 4121 = *ILAq Lectoure* 3). Schillinger 1979, 368 assumes, probably rightly, that private *taurobolia* had been performed earlier.

[216] *CIL* XIII 1751 = *ILS* 4131 = *CCCA* 5: 133f. n. 386, pl. CXXXI: *Taurobolio Matris d.m. Id., quod factum est ex imperio Matris {d.} deum pro salute imperatoris Caes. T. Aeli Hadriani Antonini Aug. Pii p.p. liberorumque eius, et status coloniae Lugudun., L. Aemilius Carpus VIvir Aug., item dendrophorus, vires excepit, et a Vaticano transtulit, ara et bucranium suo inpendio consacravit, sacerdote Q. Sammio Secundo ab XVviris occabo et corona exornato, cui sanctissimus ordo Lugdunens. perpetuitatem sacerdoti decrevit, App. Annio Atilio Bradua, T. Clod. Vibio Varo cos. L.D.D.D.*... There is a large bull's head with *infulae* in bas-relief on the stone which divides the section ending *dendrophorus* from that beginning *vires excepit*. Presumably the word *bucranium* in the text refers to this image; but it is not impossible that the bull's skull was also buried. On the right lateral face of the altar is a brief additional text: *Cuius mesonyctium factum est V. id. Dec.* (9 December). The nature of this nocturnal ceremony is obscure (cf. *CIL* VI 10098 = 33961 = *ILS* 5172); but the addition implies that the altar itself was erected well before the end of 160.

[217] Rutter 1968, 235 argued, as others before him had done, that the sacrifice must have taken place at Rome and the *vires* transported to Lugdunum. I accept Schillinger's argument (1979, 364f.) against this interpretation, which is based on the attested existence of a *vaticanum* in Moguntiacum/Mainz (*CIL* XIII 7281 = *ILS* 3805, AD 236); cf. also Fishwick 1967, 143–5. The earliest taurobolic altar from Rome is dated AD 295 (*CIL* VI 505 = *ILS* 4143).

[218] This inscription is the earliest evidence for the regular method of appointing civic priests of Mater Magna: Q. Sammius Secundus, the supervising priest, had been first selected by the local municipal senate (*ordo*) and then confirmed by the *XVviri sacris faciundis* at Rome, who granted him the right to wear the insignia of such office,

were, as usual in Roman custom, first boiled then burned on an altar for the gods, and the rest of the meat eaten *in situ* by the participants, distributed or sold to butchers. What was specific to the Metroac form of the *taurobolium* was the special treatment of the severed scrotum (*vires*).[219] In view of the arrangements in the sacred area at Ostia, one of the best-known Metroac sites, where the only killing-altar was a perfectly normal one in front of her temple, we should probably conclude that *vaticanum* was simply a name for such an altar, taken to represent a notional reference-point at Rome.[220]

The sudden appearance of this type of sacrifice, at any rate epigraphically speaking (all epigraphic evidence for the *taurobolium* after 160 in the Latin-speaking Empire is related to the cult of the Mater Magna), seems to be associated with a readiness on the part of relatively wealthy municipal figures to combine public and private concerns.[221] One consideration is no doubt that, at least in some places, persons who undertook a *taurobolium* for the benefit of the state (*pro salute imperatoris*) after obtaining permission from the local archigallus (*ex vaticinatione archigalli*) could be excused duty as *tutores*, that is, be freed from the responsibility for looking after the affairs of minors (including the children of liberti) and certain categories of women, which might be quite onerous.[222]

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a wreath and the *occabus* (a Greek word meaning 'arm-band' otherwise known only from late lexica: Hesychius s.v.; Etym. magn. p. 383.21 Gaisford). The fullest statement is *CIL* X 3698 = *ILS* 4175 (Cumae, AD 289). Schillinger rightly argued that this was intended to tighten up a previously laxer or more informal practice (1979, 358f.). Note that the centre of the Roman cult, at any rate in this connection, has shifted from the Palatine temple to the Vaticanum; there is however one mid III^{p} taurobolic altar that gives Mater Magna the epithets *Phryg]iae Palatinae: AE* 1910: 217 = 1924:26 = *ILGN* 518 (under Philippus Arabs).

[219] It is unknown whether the scrotum was severed while the animal was still alive, after it had been stunned, or after it had been bled to death. Those who believe that the sacrifice was substitutive will doubtless incline to the first possibility.

[220] The altar was built in the Antonine period—roughly contemporary with the first *taurobolium* inscriptions—and continued to be used into III^{p}; there was no comparable construction earlier; see *CCCA* 3: 109 under no. 362 with pl. CCXV; Rieger 2004, 94 fig. 61; 97 fig. 62; 121 fig. 90c. (oddly enough, Rieger herself does not even mention it.) There is no sacrificial altar in front of any other temple or *sacellum* in the sacred precinct. It would thus be reasonable to infer that the *taurobolia/criobolia*, as well as other sacrifices, took place here.

[221] I cannot follow Borgeaud however in his estimate that "the taurobolium was an aristocratic ritual whose purpose was to guarantee the health and well-being of the imperial house and the city" (2004, 92).

[222] *Fragmenta Vaticana* §148, *de excusatione: [Is] qui in Portu pro salute imperatoris sacrum facit ex vaticinatione archigalli, a tutelis excus[a]tur* (= *FIRA*^{2} 2: 496). On the law relating to *tutelae*, see E. Sachers, s.v. Tutela (1,2), *RE* 7A2 (1948) 1497–1599. Rutter not only wrongly

Although undated, this concession (which is actually limited to Portus at Ostia but may have been applied more widely—we frankly do not know) has generally been linked to a reform of the cult of the Mater Magna under Antoninus Pius, though scepticism about the existence of such a reform has recently been aired.[223] A *taurobolium/criobolium* was a relatively lavish undertaking: just to list the most obvious items, it involved producing a full-grown bull, or a ram, from one's estate or on the open market, defraying the costs of the sacrifice itself and the preparation of the accompanying feast, paying for the stone and the stone-mason; obtaining permission to erect the finished altar.[224] The sort of people, often *curiales*, who could afford such gestures were seriously interested in divine support for the social order that maintained their property and security, their isogamous marriages and their access to municipal honours.[225] The interests of wealthy freedmen were hardly different. For them it was important that the sacrifice took place in public.[226] The very fact that we still possess at least eighty-five taurobolic altars from the 220-year period AD 160–c. 350 (excluding the remarkable twenty-two altars alone from Lactora/Lectoure in Aquitania) suggests that there were a good many in the western Empire prepared to use

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believed that the concession related to tax exemptions (mis-citing the text on p. 234) but breezily declared, "I think it is safe to assume that the benefits to the dedicant of a public taurobolium (i.e. remission of taxes) applied not only to the inhabitants of Portus, but to individuals throughout the Empire" (p. 236 n. 34). Nothing could be less certain.

[223] A reform of the cult under Antoninus Pius was first suggested by Lambrechts 1952a, cf. M. van Doren, L'évolution des mystères phrygiens à Rome, *AntCl* 22 (1953) 79–88; it was Beaujeu 1955, 313–20 who linked the changes to the *taurobolium*. These claims are now treated as facts by most scholars, e.g. Rutter 1968, 235f.; Schillinger 1979, 352–73; Thomas 1984, 1522; R. Sierra, Taurobolio y culto imperial en la Galia Narbonense, in Alvar, Blánquez and Wagner 1995, 201–14; Martínez Maza 2000, 68. Borgeaud however, perhaps rightly, prefers to emphasise the speculative nature of the inference by speaking of the "reforms" (e.g. 2004, 119). Rieger, while accepting that Mater Magna has a special place in Antonine coinage, argues that such 'reforms' were merely formal recognitions of gradual, 'spontaneous' changes in organisational and ritual practice (2004, 163–5, but see p. 172). I revert to this issue several times in the following pages.

[224] A cursive inscription on a brick from Sains-du-Nord (Belgica) has been read as the account for furnishing the meat required for a taurobolium (spelled *torobol(ium)*): *AE* 2001: 1398, cf. 1997: 1140). For what little it is worth, *Carmen contra paganos* 57f. contrasts the vast wealth of the celebrant (by implication, a pre-requisite in view of the expense of the *taurobolium*) with the fact that he dresses in rags for the ceremony (cf. McLynn 1996, 325).

[225] Cf. L.E. Tacoma, *Fragile Hierarchies: The Urban Élites of third-century Roman Egypt*. Mnemosyne Suppl. 271 (Leyden 2006).

[226] So rightly Schillinger 1979, 366f.

the cult of the Mater Magna as a means of demonstrating that their private religious feelings by no means excluded a concern for the well-being of the state.[227] The donors of such altars (and so the preceding ceremony) represent a relatively wealthy minority of worshippers of the Mater Magna: most adherents were certainly of more modest means. From this perspective, we should think of the *taurobolium* as representing an aspiration that the majority of individual worshippers of Mater Magna were never able to fulfil.

Since Graillot's day, it has been usual to distinguish two forms of the ritual: one on behalf of the emperor or a city, the other private.[228] In fact, however, 'public' *taurobolia* should be seen as one aspect of a more general desire among the patrons and members of the Metroac *collegia* to find appropriate means of honouring the imperial house.[229] At any rate at the temple of the Mater Magna at Ostia, the fashion for *taurobolia* seems to work alongside and then to replace the intensive phase of offering dedications and imperial portraits associated with the Flavian to late-Antonine periods.[230] At the same time, the scope of the public institutions tends to widen: not only the entire imperial house but also the Senate, the XV*viri*, the *ordo equester*, the Roman army, the merchant-fleet may be included in the good wishes.[231] Conversely, 'private' *taurobolia* have rightly been understood as in a sense collective events, even though the sacrifice was paid for by an individual and he or she was the primary beneficiary.[232] The ritual was one means of

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[227] Rutter published a very incomplete list of 115 items (some doubled) as an appendix to his work (1968, 243–9) with brief extracts; Duthoy reprinted 133 texts in full (1969, 5–53), but these figures include many items from after AD 350. At least one 'public' *taurobolium* is known for: Antoninus Pius; M. Aurelius; Commodus, Septimius Severus; Clodius Albinus; Caracalla; Severus Alexander; Maximinus Thrax; Gordian III; Philip; Trebonianus Gallus and his son Volusianus; Valerian and Gallienus; Probus; Diocletian and Maximian. No 'public' *taurobolia* are yet known from the Germanies.

[228] Graillot 1912, 159; Rutter 1968, 236f.

[229] The opposition between 'public' and 'private' in relation to Greek religion has rightly been questioned by the various contributors to V. Dasen and M. Piérart (eds.), *Ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ: Les cadres 'privés' et 'publiques' de la religion grecque antique*. Kernos Suppl. 15 (Liège 2005); in a non-religious context: N. Bateman, Public Buildings: Some Contrasts, in B. Watson (ed.), *Roman London: Recent Archaeological Work*. JRA Suppl. 24 (Portsmouth RI 1998) 47–57.

[230] Ostia is in fact the best example: Meiggs 1973, 360–5; Rieger 2004, 159–65; 288–300; more generally, Schillinger 1979, 312–32.

[231] E.g. *AE* 1920: 92 = *CIL* XIV 40 = 4301; XIV 42 = *ILS* 526/4141 = *CCCA* 3: 127 no. 405 (Ostia).

[232] *CIL* XIII 522 = *ILAq Lectoure* 13 = *CCCA* 5: 240: *Severus Iulli fil. vires tauri quo propri(e) per tauropolium pub(lice) factum fecerat consacravit*, is a private inscription that nevertheless

committing the Metroac community to a particular ethical stance, one to which all could subscribe even without being themselves directly involved.[233] Likewise, I would argue, performing a *taurobolium/criobolium* to safeguard the social order by no means implies the absence of private concerns—we should not think of public and private here as mutually exclusive categories. A public *taurobolium* not only honoured the institutions of the state it also registered the higher status of the donor(s), since it required both permission from the local *archigallus* and the presence of civic priests as witnesses.[234] The withering of 'private' dedications from the mid-third century is probably a mirage caused by the general disappearance of private epigraphy of all kinds with the onset of the politico-military crisis, and thus not in itself at all indicative.[235] On the other hand, the social and economic disruption caused by the political uncertainties, to say nothing of events such as the deep raids by the Alamanni and the Franks, must have limited the funds available to the *curiales* and wealthy freedmen for such gestures.

From this perspective, the fourth-century Roman *taurobolium*-altars from the Vaticanum in Rome, almost all by members of the (by now largely side-lined) Roman élite, is not as remarkable as is often made out.[236] As McLynn remarks, "the taurobolium, it appears, had become the preserve of priests" (1996, 324). The late inscriptions focus upon the tauroboliated priest as an individual, not as a member of a college; given that the real importance of the senatorial priestly colleges had shrunk to insignificance in the late fourth century, this was only

insists the ritual was performed *publice*. This group of altars from Lactora/Lectoure in Aquitania also reveals that the priest Traianus Nundinius on a single day (8 Dec. 241) supervised one *taurobolium* celebrated by the entire *ordo* of the municipium (*CIL* XIII 511 = *ILAq Lectoure* 16) and eight for private individuals, mainly women (XIII 512–19 = *ILAq Lectoure* 17–24). I think it likely that the date was chosen to mark the trib. pot. IV of Gordian III on 9 December.

[233] One or two texts note the fact that all the *dendrophori* and *sacrati* gathered to witness the sacrifice, e.g. *AE* 1897: 121 = *CIL* VIII 23401; *AE* 1898: 46 = *CIL* VIII 23400; *AE* 1961: 201.

[234] *CIL* XII 1567 = *ILS* 4140 = *AE* 1982: 695 (Dea Augusta/Die, Gallia Narbon., AD 245) is a fine example of a private taurobolium being undertaken by a member of the curial class, accompanied by all the pomp of local officialdom.

[235] On the variable incidence of economic set-backs in this period, see recently R.P. Duncan-Jones, Economic change and the transition to Late Antiquity, in S. Swain and M.J. Edwards (eds.), *Approaching Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2004) 20–52.

[236] The most serviceable list is still that assembled in the Appendix to H. Bloch, A new Document of the last Pagan Revival in the West, *HThR* 38 (1945) 199–244 (of course without commitment to his overall analysis). For the dates on which these *taurobolia* were celebrated (spanning the period 12 March to 13 August), see Vermaseren 1977, 46.

appropriate. These inscriptions recording private initiations read like a complete individual *cursus honorum*. The late-Roman *taurobolium*, we might urge, provided an occasion for the lavish public staging, and permanent memorialisation, of the personal commitment of these Roman senators to the continued performance of pagan cult. "An inscription mentioning a 'religious fact' is not necessarily a 'religious inscription' ".[237]

There has been some debate over the effects that the *taurobolium* was supposed to produce. It used to be assumed that its benefits, spiritual and material, were of limited duration, so that a renewal was necessary, apparently every twenty years. This period however is mentioned only by two late fourth-century inscriptions from Rome, and a passage of the *Carmen contra paganos* (l. 62).[238] (The rare references to (*dies*) *natalis* or *natalicium* in taurobolic contexts are irrelevant to this issue, since they seem to refer to actual, not spiritual, birthdays.[239]) It may be appropriate here to recall that Lucius in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, Book 11 undergoes two initiations within a space of much less than twenty years and is

[237] J.F. Matthews, Symmachus and the oriental cults, *JRS* 63 (1973) 175–95 at 182.

[238] *CIL* VI 504 = *ILS* 4153 (13 Aug. AD 376): *vota… bis deni suscipit orbis*; 512 = 4154 (23 May AD 390): *iterato, viginti annis exp[le]tis taurobolii sui* (sic). VI 502 = *ILS* 4150 (5 April AD 383) records a repetition but gives no period. Sempronia Eutocia and Ulattius Priscus in *CIL* V 6961–2 = *ILS* 4158–9 (Turin) apparently assumed the effects will be lasting: *viribus aeterni(s) taurobolio* (which I take to mean that the bull's testicles are to be preserved, e.g. in honey and spices, for ever, and that this has some connection with the expected duration of the benefit). McLynn has suggested that Sextilius Agesilaus Aedisius' claim that he has been *in aeternum renatus* (*CIL* VI 510 = *ILS* 4152, 13 Aug. AD 376) should be read not as "anti-Christian fanaticism but the over-eagerness of the parvenu" (1996, 327f.). At any rate, it has generally, and rightly, been held that this is a purely personal or individual claim: Nilsson, *GGR* 2, 653; Duthoy 1969, 105–7; Sfameni Gasparro 1983, 206. *Carmen*: Martínez Maza 2000, 71ff. A standard twenty years' duration was the usual older view: e.g. Hepding 1903, 198; Graillot 1912, 172.

[239] *CIL* II 5260 (Emerita): *aram tauriboli sui natalici redditi*; *AE* 1956: 255 = *IRC Pacen.* 289 (Beja, Portugal): *criobolati natali suo*; *CIL* XIII 573 (Bordeaux): *natalici virib(us)*; 11352 (Mediomatricum, Belgica): *ara(m) t(auroboliatam?) ob na[t]alicium ex iussu.…*; the idea that these were spiritual birthdays was suggested by M.-J. Lagrange, Mélanges 1: Attis et le christianisme, III. Les mystères et tauroboles, *RevBib* 28 (1919) 465ff.; cf. Duthoy 1969, 106ff. It is thinkable that one's birthday (celebrated in antiquity on the first of the month in which the actual anniversary fell) was held to be a suitable occasion for such a sacrifice, held to promise special divine protection. It should however be noted that the Calendar of Filocalus (AD 354) uses the expression *dies natalis* inter alia to denote the day on which members of the house of Constantine attained imperial rank as Caesar or Augustus, e.g. *InscrIt* XIII.2 p. 251 (Constantine); p. 259 (Constantius), cf. Curran 2000, 224f. Such a usage must surely have emerged from a popular association between the literal 'birthday' and the metaphorical 'happy/fortunate day'.

preparing for a third as the work closes.[240] There is therefore no inherent implausibility in the idea that the effects of the *taurobolium*, to the extent that it can be treated as an initiation, might have to be renewed. We can only say that there is no evidence for such a renewal before the final quarter of the fourth century;[241] that, though public renewal might well suit the interest of these late-Roman aristocrats in public display, only three such cases are known—that is, the great majority even of them either failed to renew, or died before they could do so; and there is only one extant case between AD 160 and 350 of the same person erecting a second taurobolic altar, namely Valeria Gemina at Lactora/Lectoure in AD 239 and 241—and even here the earlier inscription seems to imply that she did not actually perform the *taurobolium* herself but was simply fulfilling the second part of the ceremony (*vires accipere/consecrare*) on behalf of someone else.[242]

The great majority of dedicators claim to have offered a *taurobolium*, no more and no less. That is, we must assume, they actually sacrificed such an animal.[243] A certain inflation, if that is what it is, begins to appear in the third century, when we occasionally find *taurobolium et criobolium*, both a bull and a ram, being offered.[244] A pair of altars from

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[240] This may equally, however, be taken as a mark of Lucius' religious excess, or of the exclusiveness of initiation to a particular site or temple. Such exclusiveness is a typical strategy of rarefication.

[241] Assuming that *CIL* X 1596 = *ILS* 4271 (see n. 214 above), which includes the phrase *iterata est*, is not in the ordinary sense a taurobolic altar.

[242] *CIL* XIII 510 = *ILAq Lect.* 15: *S.M.d Val(eria) Gemina vires escepit Eutychetis VIII Kal. April(es) sacerdote Traianio Nundinio d.n. Gordiano et Aviola cos.* (24 March 239). Noting that 24 March was the *dies sanguinis*, Rutter (1968, 238), if I understand him correctly, suggested that Gemina offered the scrotum of a man named Eutyches who had castrated himself on that day. Why she should have done so, he does not say. I take it that this formula is an abbreviated allusion to that in *CIL* XIII 522 = *ILAq Lectoure* 13: *vires tauri quo propri(e) per tauropolium pub(lice) factum fecerat consacravit* (cited n. 232 above), and that Gemina consecrated the *vires* of a bull killed for (her husband) Eutyches, now deceased. The meaning "take over (from a predecessor), take up in turn" is well-attested for *excipio* (*OLD* sense 15; cf. sense 7: "take under one's care or protection"). It is at any rate noteworthy that Gemina does not state, as she does in her own taurobolic altar two and a half years later, that the victims were her own property, *tauropolium accepit hosti(i)s suis: CIL* XIII 518 = *ILAq Lect.* 23.

[243] At Dea Augusta/Die, Gallia Narb. the *pontifex perpetuus* of the *civitas* and his two daughters each gave a bull *cum suis hostiis et apparam(entis) omnibus* (see n. 234 above).

[244] *CIL* VI 505 = *ILS* 4143 (AD 295); 506 = 4144 (similar date); 508 = 4146 (AD 319); VIII 4846 = *ILAlg* 1: 1983 (Severus Alexander); 23400–1 (AD 276/84 and 285/93); XII 1311 (first quarter III^{p}); 1745 (AD 209–11); *AE* 1924: 26 = *ILGN* 518; *AE* 1931: 63; 1955: 49. Sometimes this is suggested simply by the imagery: e.g. *CCCA* 5: 133f. n. 386 (cited n. 216 above) and *CIL* XIII 11042 = *ILS* 9278 = *CCCA* 5: 146 no. 420, pls. CXLV-VI (Vesunna, III^{p}), which mention only a *taurobolium*, carry both a bull's

Teate Marrucinorum/Chieti (Reg. IV) dedicated by the same man, Petronius Marcellus, a priest (probably of the Mater Magna), one on the occasion of his *criobolium et (h)aemobolium*, the other, in honour of Maximinus Thrax and his son Maximus (i.e. between early 236 and mid-April 238), on the occasion of his *taurobolium*, suggest that altars erected for a *taurobolium et criobolium* may in fact have commemorated two separate sacrifices, first the *criobolium*, then the *taurobolium*, perhaps undertaken several years apart.[245] Tempting though this is as a model, it is attested only in this one instance.[246] More than a century later,

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head with *infulae* and, less conspicuously, a ram's head. *CIL* XIII 1753 = *ILS* 4133 = *CCCA* 5: 137 no. 392, pl. CXXXV (Lugdunum, AD 194) carries a bull's head above the ram's head on one lateral face, but a ram's head above the bull on the other.

[245] *CIL* IX 3014–5 = *ILS* 4137–8 (= *CIL* II 180e* = II.5 p. 205 no. 48*) = *CCCA* 4: 69 nos.172f. This is the sole occurrence of the word *(h)aemobolium* in this context; though clearly of Greek origin, it is not recorded in LSJ[9]. We must assume that it is a reference to the collection of the animal's blood. Since the blood was collected in bowls at all sacrifices (and later made into blood-sausage etc.), the development of a special word implies that something slightly different was done with the blood at these Metroac sacrifices. There is no reason to suppose it was poured over the donor (cf. following note): that would be to show that Prudentius still lurks in the mind.

[246] A further complication involves the *cernus/cerni*. This vessel is mentioned in the singular and the plural in five inscriptions, four from North Africa, one from Rome (see Duthoy 1969, 99ff.; *AE* 1897: 121 = 1898: 46 = *CIL* VIII 23401: there is only one inscription here, not two). The earliest is from the period AD 169–77. Three texts from Mactar seem to classify the *criobolium* and *taurobolium* as *sacra cernorum*, i.e. as two members of the same class of rituals, "the ritual of the *cerni*", e.g. *perfectis rit{a}e sacris cernorum crioboli et tauroboli* (*AE* 1892: 18); *perfectis rit[e sacris cernorum] et cri[oboli et tauroboli* (*AE* 1959: 49). That from Utica however seems to treat the two as separate: *cerno et criobolio de suo acceptis aram…fecerunt* (*AE* 1955: 49; no taurobolium). At Rome the situation seems again to be different, or is at any rate expressed in different terminology: *taurobolium (et) criobol(ium) caerno perceptum per Fl. Antonium Eustochium sac(erdotem)* (*CIL* VI 497 = *ILS* 4146, AD 319). A Metroac *cernus* was certainly a vessel or container that could be carried in procession by a woman (e.g. *CIL* II 179, *cernofora*; ἐκιρνοφόρησα ap. Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 2.15.3). Duthoy 1969, 73f. argued that it could not possibly have contained the *vires* (he preferred blood); Rieger 2004, 166 believes on the contrary that they may have held ashes, horns—and/or *vires*. Σ Nicandr. *Alexiph.* 217–21 asserts that κέρνους φασὶ τοὺς μυστικοὺς κρατῆρας, ἐφ' ὧν λύχνους τιθέασιν: Hepding 1903, 9, cf. Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 68; 81. The Greek word κέρνος normally denoted a ritual vessel with several sub-divisions, or small jars (cf. A. Bignasca, s.v. *kernos*, *ThesCRA* 5 [2005] 2b.VIA pp. 250–52) used for vegetable offerings and liquids; the scholion to Plato, *Gorg.* 497c however clearly thought they were the same as λίκνον, though this has been rejected in relation to the Eleusinian cult. Archaeology is thus of no help here. I incline to agree with Borgeaud (1998, 188f.) that the texts from Mactar and Rome legitimate the inference that, at any rate in the cult of the Mater Magna in the High Principate, the *vires* of the sacrificial victims might be transported in *cerni*, whatever other uses these objects may have had (among the finds at the joint temple of Mater Magna and Isis in Mainz were large quantities of incinerated figs, nuts and other fruits, which had been offered to her: M. Witteyer, Verborgene Wün-

this 'fused option' becomes quite regular among the wealthy senators in the Phrygianum, who could certainly have afforded to sacrifice both types of animal on the same occasion. Just a handful of individuals commemorate a *criobolium* and nothing else.[247] This might have been because they could not afford a bull; but it may equally be that they died before they could perform the *taurobolium*, or that the second altar was erected but has not survived.[248] We should therefore not jump to the conclusion that such donors were cheapskates.[249] It is however possible that some collective celebrations do attest financial constraints. An altar from Narbonne, for example, records the performance of a collective *taurobolium* at the command of the goddess *ex stipe conlata*, with the aid of a public subscription.[250] On these occasions, we may suppose, the members of the Metroac associations, with the approval of the city magistrates, went through the streets asking for alms. It is in fact likely that there was considerable local, and indeed individual, variation in the manner of handling *taurobolia*, which did not occur every day and for which the ritual procedures probably had to be re-invented, or creatively 're-called', on each occasion.[251] The variety of different terms used in

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sche: Befunde antiken Schadenzaubers aus Mogontiacum-Mainz, in Broderson and Kropp 2004, 41–50 at 48).

[247] *CIL* II 5521 = *ILS* 4139 (Cordoba, AD 238: a woman; the man celebrated a *taurobolium*); XIV 41 = *ILS* 4135 = Rieger 2004, 295 MM 62B (Ostia, Commodan); VIII 8203 = ILS 4136 (*pro salute imp.* [Severus Alexander] and undertaken *ex vaticinatione archigalli*, so we have no reason to believe the donors were not well-connected); *AE* 1961: 201 = *CCCA* 5: 40f. no. 114 (*cerno et criobolio de suo acceptis*, Q. Latinius Victor and his son, *egregius filius*, so Victor was presumably a *primipilaris* vel sim. The altar depicts a ram only). Perhaps also *ILAfr.* 201 (frag.).

[248] *AE* 1956: 255 = *IRC Pacen.* 289 (Pax Iulia/Beja, Portugal, cited n. 239 above) is an interesting case involving a father and son (*duo Irenaei pater et filius*) who held a *criobolium* to celebrate their birthdays. The date has been disputed: mid-II^{p}: J. Encarnaçâo ap. *IRC Pacen.*; II–III^{p}: M. M. Alves Dias, Os cultos orientais em Pax Iulia, Lusitania, *Memorias de Historia Antigua* 5 (1981) 394; IV^{p}: Duthoy 1969 no. 78. The first two are possible; Duthoy's date is not. I incline to think that Encarnaçâo is right.

[249] Since the arguments of Duthoy 1969, 61f., no one now believes in the old idea that the *criobolium* was specifically in honour of Attis.

[250] *CIL* XII 4321 = *ILS* 4119: *Matri deum taurobolium indictum iussu ipsius ex stipe conlata celebrarunt publice Narbon(enses)*. *Indictum* here means 'proclaimed at a public meeting' rather than 'imposed'.

[251] The largest number of taurobolium inscriptions known from a single site, disregarding the Vaticanum in Rome, is the twenty-two from Lactora/Lectoure in Aquitania (see n. 232 above). Disregarding the nine performed on a single day in December 241, we have evidence for thirteen taurobolia performed in the city over the century between AD 160 and, say, 260, i.e. 1.3 per decade (though in fact they seem to cluster in III^{p}). Even granting massive epigraphic loss, these events cannot have been very common.

the *taurobolium*-inscriptions to refer to the sacrificial event surely had its correlate in the variety of actual procedures followed.[252]

Some have argued that, in view of the fact that the victim's scrotum was severed from the trunk and set apart, the *taurobolium* must have been a substitutive sacrifice. It is not always quite clear what is at stake here. One thought is that the severing of the animal's scrotum represented the subject's longing to satisfy the Mother's gelding-imperative while enabling him to attain the rank of priest without personal loss of the power of procreation.[253]

By implication, the 'true' worshippers of the Mater Magna were the *galli*, who actually had sacrificed their manhood. Maria Grazia Lancellotti has indeed argued that the *taurobolium* should be seen as an attempt to open the 'mystery' of the self-sacrifice of the *galli* to a wider public. "This can take place only through a 'revised reading' of the Gallus and the replacement of his real sacrifice with one that is symbolic".[254] Everyone accepts that, whereas the ordinary *galli* had to geld themselves, the *archigalli*, as civic priests, must have been exempt from such a requirement, since among them are found full Roman citizens, to whom such practices were forbidden.[255] On this line of argument, the introduction of the *taurobolium* and the creation of the position of *archigallus* are intimately related. This would be the main achievement of the supposed second reform of the cult, under Antoninus Pius. On this view, it must have attempted to correct a number of problems that had emerged in the aftermath of the reform under Claudius.[256]

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[252] Known terms include *taurobolium/vires facere, perficere, accipere, excipere, movere, transferre* (cf. Borgeaud 1998, 188). Note also expressions such as *hoc taurobolio sacrum acceperunt* (*AE* 1973: 579).

[253] E.g. Latte 1960, 354 n. 2; more recently, Turcan 1996b, 394.

[254] Lancellotti 2002, 114. She continues: "The *mystai* are the Galli/non-Galli, those who castrate themselves without castrating themselves".

[255] This is not a very strong argument, of course, since it assumes that such laws were intended to be enforced, rather than to have expressive force, and that that there was a high degree of internalisation of the law. Neither assumption appears very plausible.

[256] A reform of the cult by Claudius was urged on the basis of Joh. Lydus, *De mens.* 4.59 = Sanzi 2003, 310: Cybele no. 57, by J. Carcopino, La réforme romaine du culte de Cybèle et d'Attis, 1: L'introduction officielle à Rome du culte d'Attis; II: Galles et archigalles, in idem, 1942, 49–75; 76–171. On this hypothesis, it was Claudius who introduced the archigallate to supervise the cult, thus reducing the *galli* to the role of exotic bit-players. As I mentioned above (n. 223) it was Lambrechts who first proposed a second reform under Antoninus Pius that established the archigallate. See now J. Alvar, El archigalato, in L. Hernández and J. Alvar (eds.), *Jerarquías religiosas y control social en el mundo antiguo. Actas del XXVII Congreso Internacional GIREA-ARYS IX* (Valladolid 2004) 453–458.

One familiar objection to the theory that the *taurobolium* was essentially substitutive is that it was also performed by women, who of course had no testicles they could vicariously sacrifice.[257] Perhaps two considerations are more telling. First, how could a substitutive rite, which only makes sense at the individual level, have become a largely public ceremonial, intended to maintain the welfare of the empire and the imperial house? If the *taurobolium* were primarily substitutive, how could there be collective rituals undertaken by entire communities? Second, does not the idea of substitution, as normally understood, assume that the *galli* somehow constituted the ideological or normative centre of the cult at Rome? A striking sight they may have been in processions, and fascinating they may have been to poets and satirists, but in the civic (epigraphic) manifestation of the cult, especially in Italy, it is representative individuals and the colleges of the *dendrophori* and *cannophori*, with their close relation to the imperial house, that are far more visible.[258] It seems to me more plausible to argue that the primary function of the *taurobolium* was commemorative, closely analogous in fact to the annual felling of the pine-tree during the March festival and its transportation by the *dendrophori* into the temple area, a rite that recalled the act of Agdistis/Mater Magna cutting down the pine-tree under which Attis had castrated himself and died, and then bringing it into a cave, her dwelling-place.[259] According to Arnobius, Cybele gathered up Attis' bloody scrotum and washed it before burial.[260] This detail must surely be linked with the treatment of the scrota of the sacrificial animals alluded to in the epigraphy.[261] An altar from Vesunna (Périgueux) in

[257] E.g. Rutter 1968, 237f., who, since he believes in the substitution-theory, finds himself forced to offer an extremely muddled 'explanation', that women were barred from performing public *taurobolia* (which he himself admits is not the case). Both Lancellotti 2002, 112 and Rieger 2004, 167 argue on the contrary that the very fact that women could perform the *taurobolium* proves its substitutive character.

[258] Meiggs 1973, 360–65; Schillinger 1979, 378: "Aber der Eindruck läßt sich doch nicht abweisen, daß, vereinfacht gesagt, in Italien mehr organisiert, in den Provinzen mehr gebetet wurde, oder anders ausgedrückt, daß eine Steinsetzung in Italien eher der Repräsentation galt als der Aüßerung persönlicher Frommigkeit".

[259] Arnobius, *Adv. nat.* 5.7 with Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 40 with n. 66.

[260] Ibid.: *sed abscisa quae fuerant Magna legit et † Mater deum, inicit his terram.* Agdistis/Cybele wraps the scrotum in Attis clothes; and violets appear on the grave. Both the clothes and the violets are directly linked by Arnobius to the ritual of the *arbor intrat*, cf. Mora 1994, 124f.

[261] Cf. Burkert, 1979, 120. As in the case of the *galli* discussed in the previous section, there is a good deal of uncertainty in e.g. Arnobius, *Adv. nat.* 5.12, about what sexual parts Attis and the others actually cut off: just the testicles or also the penis?

the Musée du Perigord, where the bull is represented lying behind a statue-bust of Attis, so as to recall the shared loss of their *vires*, seems clearly to imply such a commemorative function for the *taurobolium*.[262] But as the social status of Metroac worshippers rose, the preservation of the *vires* of sacrificial animals, as a metonym of the corpse of Attis, meant that the latter could be interpreted as a fitting metaphor for the *salus* of the individual and the Metroac community. From there it was but a small step to the custom of individuals donating animals *in proprio nomine* on behalf of the empire as a whole, with its constituent institutions. The *vires* thus came to evoke not so much to the castration of Attis as the preservation of his corpse.

c. *Initiation*

> Ἆρα…τὰ ἀνέξοιστα ἐξοίσομεν καὶ τὰ ἀνεκλάλητα ἐκλαλήσομεν;
>
> Julian, Or. 5, 158d

> εἴ τις ἄνδρα, Ἕλληνα ἢ βάρβαρον, μυεῖσθαι παραδοίη εἰς μυστικόν τινα μυχὸν ὑπερφυῆ κάλλει καὶ μεγέθει, πολλὰ μὲν ὁρῶντα μυστικὰ θεάματα, πολλῶν δὲ ἀκούοντα τοιούτων φωνῶν….[263]
>
> Dio of Prusa, *Or.* 12.33

In keeping with ideas about initiation into the pagan mysteries that were then widespread, Hepding claimed that initiates into the mysteries of the Mater Magna were symbolically placed in a tomb.[264] One argument in favour of this idea is the word *moriturus* used by Firmicus Maternus in a passage relating to admission to the mysteries of the Mater Magna.[265] Another is a passage of Sallustius that seems to affirm

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[262] Inv. no. A3183 = *CCCA* 5: 146 no. 420, pl. CXLVI (left), cited n. 244; cf. Marco Simón 1997, 307.

[263] "…if you were to put a person, whether Greek or barbarian, in an overwhelmingly large and beautiful initiation-chamber, where he was to be initiated and witness many sights, and hear many voices, that are part of the experience…" (probably a composite image, not directly relevant to any specific cult).

[264] Hepding 1903, 196; Loisy 1932, 113.

[265] *De errore* 18.1. The passage reads: *In quodam templo ut in interioribus partibus homo moriturus possit admitti, dicit*… All modern editors since Hepding 1903, 49 read *moriturus*, which is the reading of cod. Vatic. Palat. 165, the sole ms. (which is for the most part carefully written, with a few corrections by a later hand, and some by the first editor, Mathias Flacius Illyricus). Lobeck 1829, 1: 24 suggested *oraturus*; Bursian (1856) and Halm (1867) preferred *introiturus*.

that those who had simulated their deaths drank milk, as if they were newly reborn:

> Since the myth is so intimately related to the universe we imitate the latter in its order… and keep a festival therefore. First, as having like Attis fallen from heaven and consorting with the nymph, we are dejected and abstain from bread and all other rich and coarse food (for both are unsuited to the soul). Then comes the cutting of the tree and the fast, as though we were cutting off the further progress of generation (ὥσπερ καὶ ἡμῶν ἀποκοπτομένων τὴν περαιτέρω τῆς γενέσεως πρόοδον); after this we are fed on milk as though being reborn (ὥσπερ ἀναγεννημένων); that is followed by rejoicings and garlands and as it were a new ascent to the gods (καὶ πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς οἷον ἐπάνοδος).
>
> Περὶ θεῶν 4.10, p. 8.16–25 Nock

There are however strong objections to interpreting either passage in this sense.[266] The word *moriturus* in the passage from Firmicus Maternus is not a statement internal to the ritual he is alluding to: Who is the initiate? He is called 'One who is about to die', but part of his apologetic technique of signalling at every possible moment the folly of pagan religion in case one misses the point.[267] *Moriturus* is simply the deluded pagan worshipper, doomed to die in ignorance of Christ's message.[268] The passage of Sallustius is explicitly based not upon a ritual of personal initiation but upon the sequence of the March festival, particularly, it seems, the day of rest on 26 March before the *lavatio* on 27. The motif of milk seems to be tralatician: there is no mention of it in the *symbolon* cited by Clement and Firmicus Maternus (see below),[269] just as there is no evidence for the common assumption

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[266] Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 80–82; the silence of Borgeaud 2004, 114–6 implies similar scepticism.

[267] For example: *Audio Cinyram Cyprium templum amicae meretrici donasse—ei erat Venus nomen—, initiasse etiam Cypriae Veneri plurimos et vanis consecrationibus deputasse, statuisse etiam ut quicumque initiari vellet secreto veneris sibi tradito, assem unum mercedis nomine deae daret* (10.1), where *vanis*, *deputasse* and *secreto… tradito* are all part of the same technique. See I. Opelt, Schimpfwörter in der Apologie *De errore profanarum religionum* des Firmicus Maternus, *Glotta* 52 (1974) 114–26; D.M. Cosi, Firmico Materno e i misteri di Attis, *Annali Fac. Lett. Pad.* 2 (1977) 55–81; J. Pépin, Réactions du christianisme latin à la sotériologie métroaque: Firmicus Maternus, Ambrosiaster, Saint Augustin, in Bianchi and Vermaseren 1982, 256–75; L.W. Barnard, L'intolleranza negli apologiste cristiani con speciale riguardo a Firmicus Maternus, *Cristianesimo nella storia* 11 (1990) 505–21.

[268] He goes on to claim: *pestiferum veneni virus hausisti… cibum istum mors sequitur… alius est cibus qui salutem largitur* (18.2). An exact parallel is to be found in 27.1: *(Diabolus… disposuit ut…) perituros homines ex ligni imitatione deciperet*.

[269] As far as I know there is only one item of evidence that may link milk with the cult of Cybele, an altar from Thessalonike mentioning a γαλακτηφόρος: L. Robert,

that specific mystery initiations must have been held at the same time as the public festival.[270] In both cases, the ὥσπερ-clause introduces a typically late, neo-platonising gloss, first the limit upon generation, then rebirth, defined by Julian in a parallel passage as ἄνοδον τῶν ψυχῶν, the ascent of souls (Or. 5, 175b).[271]

The conclusion must be that we cannot describe initiation ritual in the cult of the Mater Magna in anything remotely approaching the detail available, thanks to Apuleius, *Met.* Book 11, for the cult of Isis. We can only say that there were such rituals, whatever their specific character.[272] In all likelihood, such initiations developed only in the second century AD.[273] These general points seem to be confirmed by the occasional use of the *cista mystica* in Metroac contexts.[274] The funeral monument of L. Valerius Fyrmus, priest of Isis and Mater Magna at Ostia, and

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Sur deux inscriptions grecques. I: Épitaphe de Gérasa. II: Inscription de Thessalonique, *Mélanges Bidez* (*Annuaire Inst. phil. hist. orientales de Bruxelles* 2) 793–812 = *Opera* 2: 988–1007. However, the association of this text with the cult of Cybele remains a mere inference (it has been convincingly attributed to the cult of Dionysus), and that is scarcely a strong basis for arguing in favour of Sallustius' claim. The use of milk in other initiatory contexts (Wyss 1914) cuts both ways.

[270] For the assumption, see e.g. Hepding 1903, 182–99; Vermaseren 1977, 116–19.

[271] Note that Julian here, despite his account of the successive rituals of the March festival (168c–69d) and extensive discussion of dietary restrictions (174a–78d), nowhere so much as mentions milk.

[272] Arnobius, for example, says that one of the sources he cites, Timotheus, claimed to have drawn his information about the myth *ex reconditis antiquitatum libris et ex intimis eruta, quemadmodum ipse scribit insinuatque, mysteriis*, from abstruse books of antiquities and, as he himself writes and claims, the secret teaching of the mysteries: *Adv. nat.* 5.5 = Sanzi 2003, 277f., Cybele no. 39.1. It is generally thought that Arnobius knew Timotheus only indirectly, through Alexander Polyhistor (e.g. *FGrH* 273 F74); cf. Mora 1994, 125–28. Whether *mysteria* here can pressed, I rather doubt: what 'mysteries' of Cybele, at least in our sense of the word, could Timotheus, assuming him to be a Hellenistic writer, possibly have known? A similar doubt applies to the claim by Harpokration that Neanthes of Cyzicus (presumably III[a]) wrote up a (or the) Phrygian myth of Attis that was connected to the mysteries: μυστικὸς δὲ ὁ λόγος (*FGrH* 84 F 37, presumably from the *Teletai*); cf. Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 52f. For other references to 'mysteries' in connection with the cult of the Mater Magna (which however certainly sometimes refer simply to the *galli*) and should thus imply initiations, see Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 76. The most apparently promising reference, Julian's expression διὰ τοὺς μυστικοὺς καὶ κρυφίους θεσμούς (Or. 5, 169a), seems however simply to refer to non-public rituals during the March festival, whatever they may have been.

[273] Van Doren 1953; Borgeaud 2004, 114–6.

[274] Cf. Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 75f. *Cistae* of course appear in a range of 'mystery' contexts, Eleusinian, Dionysiac and Isiac: Σ Aristoph. *Lys.* 642; Clement, *Protrept.* 2.21.2 (Eleusis); *LSCG* no. 65 l. 29f. with Deshours 2006, 134 (Andania, i.e. Demeter); Theocritus 26.7–9; Catullus 64, 259f.; *IGUR* 160, I A 25 (Dionysiac); cf. I. Krauskopf, s.v. Kiste, *ThesCRA* 5 (2005) 274f. (for Isiac cases, see p. 317 below). Their contents certainly varied.

especially the large *cista* that occupies Cybele's throne on a monument in London (provenance unknown), suggest that initiation was a familiar institution in the cult and not simply in the context of the *galli*.[275]

Some slightly more precise information seems to be offered by the *symbolon* preserved by Clement of Alexandria, cited in Chap. 2.1.b above: ἐκ τυμπάνου ἔφαγον, ἐκ κυμβάλου ἔπιον, ἐκερνοφόρησα, ὑπὸ τὸν παστὸν ὑπέδυν.[276] The Latin version offered by Firmicus Maternus provides an interesting variant: *de tympano manducavi, de cymbalo bibi, et religionis secreta perdidici*, while his Greek translation reads: ἔκ τυμπάνου βέβρωκα, ἐκ κυμβάλου πέπωκα, γέγονα μύστης Ἄττεως.[277] These have been variously considered true variants or mere errors of transmission. In my view, they should be treated as complementary images. We might therefore suggest that 'conning the secrets', hierogamy and initiation to Attis are all ways of referring to the same reality.[278]

Despite the difficulty of drawing any clear conclusions about the content and scope of these rituals, such a perspective may allow us to interpret a good part of developed Metroac ritual by linking it to the myth. I would suggest that Attis' self-gelding acquires its full sense only if we allow that he enjoyed a sexual relation with Cybele, which was rudely interrupted by the proposed marriage to Ia. In the light of that, we should imagine a scenario in two parts, prepared for by prior instruction, purification and the successful fulfilment of certain trials or tests: the first would consist of a ritual banquet accompanied by the music of the typical Metroac type—'flutes', cymbals, castanets, tambourines. I imagine this as a sort of eucharistic meal explicitly

[275] *CIL* XIV 429 = *CCCA* 3: 152f. no. 466 = Meiggs 1973, 366 (possibly Isiac however); *CCCA* 7: 11f. no. 39, pls. xxvi–xxix (the *ferculum* is however being transported by a pair of *galli*). See also n. 195 above, on the *cista* depicted with Archigalli.

[276] "I have eaten from the tambourine, I have drunk from the cymbal, I have carried the sacred vessels, I have pushed past the curtain of the marriage chamber", Clement, *Protr.* 2.15.3 Stählin, p. 24.11f. Marcovich = Sanzi 2003, 266: Cybele no. 29.1. It must be admitted that, even if πάστος here refers to a bed-curtain, in the absence of the ritual context we cannot tell whether it refers to a literal action (however understood) rather than evoking a specially important revelatory moment through the metaphor of the marriage-night.

[277] Maternus, *De errore* 18.1 = Sanzi 2003, 267: Cybele 29.2.

[278] Vermaseren 1977, 116f. denies that the *symbolon* has anything to do with initiation (but see p. 118) and relates it to the March festival, and in particular the *mesonyctium* of Attis (the night 24–25 March).

divided into solids and liquids (ἔφαγον, ἔπιον); or perhaps better, as a marriage-feast.[279]

After the meal the initiate, I suggest, proceeded to a sacred chamber where the hierogamy, the union with the goddess, was performed.[280] It is quite uncertain whether we should suppose that this was a purely imaginary matter, or some sort of performance.[281] At any rate, from this point on, the worshipper was truly initiated and had access to the secrets of the cult. Nevertheless there remained the crime of incest, which could only be expiated by means the exemplary action of a few. To this end, the most devoted of the worshippers sacrificed their manhood for the collective good, thus appeasing the castrating Mother. The ritual fulfilment of this altruistic act may have taken place more or less spontaneously on the *dies sanguinis*, 24 March. The reward was entry into the group of the *galli*. We may speculate that others confirmed their initiation through the *taurobolium/criobolium*, the commemoration of Attis' death confirming the link between Mater Magna and the

[279] Cf. Hepding 1903, 185–88; Graillot 1912, 181; Vermaseren 1977, 119; Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 79f.

[280] I here follow the lead of Dieterich 1903, 126f.; Graillot 1912, 182f.; Pettazzoni 1924/1997, 92; Burkert 1987, 98 n. 44; 107. For some counter-arguments, note e.g. Vermaseren 1977, 117f., who, relying on *moriturus*, believes it refers to a symbolic journey to the underworld.

[281] Cf. Nilsson, *GGR* 648f.; Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 81. It seems unlikely that one can appeal for support here to the occasional occurrence of the term θαλαμηπόλος in Metroac cult. The Hellenistic epic poet Rhianos devoted an epigram to Achrylis, θαλαμηπόλος of Rhea = Cybele (*AnthPal.* 6. 173 = 67.1 Powell); Dioscorides uses the epithet of his figure Atys (*AnthPal.* 6. 220 Waltz = Gow-Page, ll. 1539–54, Dioscorides no. 16; see n. 102 above); cf. Pachis 1996, 201. Rather than there being a play here on the link between θαλάμη/θάλαμος (cave or lair; inner chamber, esp. marriage-chamber), we should perhaps take it that θαλάμη in these contexts means a pectoral representing the goddess in her shrine (as Gow explains the Dioscorides epigram). Σ Nicander, *Alexiph.* 6–8 explicitly says that θαλάμαι were τόποι ἱεροί, ὑπόγειοι, ἀνακείμενοι τῇ Ῥέᾳ, ὅπου ἐκτεμνόμενοι τὰ μήδεα κατετίθεντο οἱ τῷ Ἄττει καὶ τῇ Ῥεᾷ λατρεύοντες, "sacred subterranean places, consecrated to Rhea, where the servants of Attis and Rhea laid their severed genitals". Baslez 2004, 238, with n. 40, who wants to avoid all connection with self-gelding, naturally takes the word to mean "attaché au service de la chambre", citing the existence of an analogous role in the cult of Bel at Palmyra—perhaps not a very convincing tack, since the speaker of Dioscorides no. 16 explicitly dedicates his ἱρὴν θαλάμην to the goddess, which he coud hardly do if it were actually part of the temple. Against that, Σ Eur. *Phoen.* 931 explains θαλάμαι as vessels used for safe-keeping objects; possibly therefore the equivalent of the *cernus*, cf. Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 53. This interpretation is supported by e.g. the expression *talamas suscepit c(h)rionis* + name in Duthoy 1969: 36 no. 75 = *CCCA* 5: 176 (Corduba, AD 234), and *CIL* II 5521 = *ILS* 4139 = *CCCA* 5: 177 (AD 238). The word may therefore have acquired different connotations over time.

worshipper.[282] By fulfilling such demands, the individual worshipper helped ensure that the goddess would continue to bestow her blessings both upon him- or herself, and upon the empire as a whole.

Despite the poor evidence for initiation in the cult, I would argue that it was available to many individuals of both sexes. In order for a few to sacrifice their manhood as a sign of permanent commitment, there must have been a considerably larger pool of ordinary initiates. Although the dominant public image of them was negative, the *galli* must have been responsible for the spiritual oversight of the community; the archigallate, which did not demand gelding, was established in order to provide some social control over the cult as a whole. As we saw in relation to Portus, and doubtless elsewhere, a *taurobolium* undertaken for the public good *ex vaticinatione archigalli*, with the approval of the local archigallus, provided official dispensation from certain duties of *tutelae*.[283] The office was thus afforded a degree of official recognition. From the mid-second century, the *taurobolium/criobolium* became an option for the sub-curial class in some parts of the Latin-speaking west, as one means, alongside the dedication of imperial busts and statues, of expressing its commitment to the public weal. This sacrifice, alongside the March festival, and the *Megalensia*, became the public face of the cult of the Mater Magna—there is evidence that a procession of some sort was sometimes involved.[284] *Taurobolia* undertaken in one's capacity as a local dignitary,[285] and the involvement of the curial class as a whole, indeed of entire cities, and provinces, represent the acme of this development. Insofar as it had a private face, we should see the sacrifice not as a substitutive offering but as a renewal of individual commitment through a distinctive ritual, both by individuals and by religious colleges such as the *dendrophori* and *cannophori*; also as a more or less expected undertaking if one became a priest of Mater Magna.[286] There is, however,

[282] So far as I know, all *taurobolia/criobolia* are in honour of Mater Magna; Attis is never mentioned.

[283] See n. 222 above. The date is unknown, although it must ante-date Ulpian.

[284] E.g. *CIL* XII 1782 (p. 827): *praeeunte Aelio Castrense sacerdote tibicine Albio Verino*; XIII 1753: *praeeunte Aelio Castrense sacerdote, tibicine Fl. Restituto*; 1754: *praeeunte Aelio Antho sacerdote sacerdotia Aemilia Secundilla tibicine Fl. Restituto apparatore Vireio Hermetione; AE* 1910: 217 = 1924: 26 = *ILGN* 518: *prae[euntib(us) sacerdotibus*…

[285] E.g. *CIL* XII 385 = *CCCA* 5: 385 (Lugdunum); *AE* 1910: 217 = 1924: 26 = *ILGN* 518: *VIvir Aug(ustalis).*

[286] E.g. *CIL* XII 1745: *C. Valerius Ur[ba]nus sacerdos*; 4322: *Axia C.f. Paulina sacerd(os)* (unless in fact abl.); *AE* 1892: 18: *Q. Arellius Optatianus sacerdos eq. R.; AE* 1898: 46: *Minthonius Fortunatus sacerdos; AE* 1955: 49: *P. Valeri[us—]tianus [sacerdos]; AE* 1969/70:

as we have seen in the previous section, clear evidence of shifts of (social) meaning over the long duration: there can be little doubt that in the late fourth-century its instrumental value to the remaining Roman élite was very different from what it had to been to a Q. Arellius Optatianus, *eques Romanus* at Mactar under Marcus Aurelius, or Q. Aquius Antonianus, *pontifex perpetuus* at Lugdunum under Commodus.[287] There must however have been many smaller differences over space and time that we simply cannot chart given the evidence available to us.

e. *The* Megalensia *and the March Festival of Attis*

scaena sonat, ludique vocant: spectate, Quirites
Ovid, *Fasti* 4.187

Festivals often involve some sort of dramatisation of the myth. In the case of the Mater Magna, the two main such festivals fell at moments that were highly significant for the cult. One, the spring festival, which at least in late antiquity lasted from 15–28 March, consisted of a symbolic presentation of Attis' passion. The other, the *Megalensia*, celebrated shortly afterwards, between 4–10 April, were founded in commemoration of the arrival of Cybele at Rome in 204, and refounded by Augustus as the *Ludi Matri deum Magnae Idaeae*.[288] According to Cicero, these were in fact the only games with a non-Latin name.[289] In this case, the festival commemorated events important in the Republican reception of the cult, appropriately mythicised.

119: *Cornelius Gelastus sacerdos XVviralis M.M. I(daeae) Frygiae*; *AE* 1994: 538: *M. Rutilius Peculiaris sac(erdos) et libr(arius) public(us) XVvir(alis)*. These last examples suggest that *sacerdos* might subsume the archigallate.

[287] *AE* 1892: 18; *CIL* XII 1782 = *CCCA* 5: 369 (AD 184).

[288] *CIL* I² p. 314. The *Fasti Antiates* give the final day wrongly as 11 April. The suggestion by G.D. Hadzitis, The dates of the Megalesia, *TAPhA* 51 (1930) 165–74, based on the Calendar of Filocalus, that the games were actually held only on 4th and 10th, has not found general acceptance: Ovid, *Fasti* 4.377–82 shows that at the time of Caesar they were held continuously over at least three days, cf. Herbert-Brown 1994, 111f.; Bernstein 1998, 201. Latte 1960, 436, rightly lists them as continuing for seven days. The first day commemorated the day on which the stone was brought into the temple of Victoria in 204 (Livy 29.14.14). The last commemorated the date in 191 when the temple was consecrated, cf. J. Rüpke, Fehler und Fehlinterpretationen in der Datierung des dies natalis des stadtrömischen Mater-Magna-Tempels, *ZPE* 102 (1994) 237–40, and p. 243 above.

[289] Cicero, *de harusp. resp*. 24. They remained such until the foundation of the *ludi Adiabenici*.

Both festivals have received a great deal of modern commentary, and I do not want to discuss them here in any great detail. Both raise the issue of defining 'worshipper': processions within public festivals permitted a much wider range of participation, and a wider range of commitment, than we normally associate with the idea of 'oriental' cults. Much the earliest were the *Megalensia*, which should be thought of as but one of several competitions introduced in the half-century between the *ludi Plebeii* (220 BC) and the *ludi Florenses* (173).[290] They were organised by the curule aediles, and became, like the *ludi Romani* and others, an important part of aristocratic competition for social capital, since they provided an institutionalised opportunity for *congiaria* and extravagant display.[291] The dramatic performances, introduced in 194, were staged in two different temporary wooden theatres in the heart of the city, at least one of them directly in front of the temple on the Palatine.[292] They included dances performed by the *ballatores Cybelae*, organised into a *sodalitas*.[293] Even in the late Republic, they seem to have included mimes or pantomimes of some version of the Phrygian myth.[294] The patrician character of these Games in the Republic has in

[290] See esp. Graillot 1912, 84–87; Lambrechts 1952a; P. Boyancé, Cybèle aux Mégalésies, *Latomus* 13, 337–42 = 1972, 195–200; T.P. Wiseman, *Cinna the Poet and other Roman Essays* (Leicester 1974) 159–69; Vermaseren 1977, 113–25; H.H. Scullard, *Roman Festivals* (London 1981) 97–101; Turcan 1992a, 42–54; Bernstein 1998, 186–206.

[291] Scullard 1973, 24f.; Gruen 1990, 24–6; Becher 1991, 162; K.-J. Holkeskamp, *Rekonstruktion einer Republik*. Historische Zeitschrift, Beih. 38 (Munich 2004) 93–105. This continued: as curule aedile in 65 BC, Caesar attracted notice through his financing of the *Megalensia* (Dio 37.8.1, cf. M. Gelzer, *Caesar: der Politiker und Staatsmann*[2] [Wiesbaden 1960] 33). We might also think of the re-building of the Palatine temple after the fire of 111 BC (Pensabene 1996, 207), by one of the Caecilii Metelli (Ovid, *Fasti* 4, 348 with Obsequens 39): Delmaticus (*RE* no. 91, cos. 119), his brother Numidicus (*RE* no. 97, cos. 109) or one of the sons of Macedonicus (*RE* nos. 77 or 84). This implies that it was of considerable popular interest, and therefore especially worthwhile for an aristocrat to repair.

[292] Livy 34.54.3 gives the date of the introduction of dramatic performances as 194; Valerius Antias frg. 40 Peter = *FRH* 15 F41 claims that they were first added in 191. They cannot have been the first such to be offered at Rome, since he himself elsewhere says that they were already part of the *ludi Romani* (*FRH* 15 F 38), cf. Bernstein 1998, 193–5; Becher 1991, 162. On Cybele's gaze: Bernstein 1998, 204; the temple itself is briefly but competently described in Pensabene 1996.

[293] *CIL* VI 2265 = *ILS* 4179 = *CCCA* 3: 103 no. 361: *sodales ballatore*[*s*] *Cybelae*, to one of their deceased members, T. Flavius Chrysopaes.

[294] Taken as a *fabula praetexta* by *TRF* p. 335 (but not printed as such in the text); cf. the anecdote about Octavian's alleged effeminacy recounted by Suetonius, *Aug.* 68; Becher 1991, 163; Nauta 2004, 610f. Nero's hymn to Attis may have been performed on the Palatine too (Dio 41.20.1–2). For a Christian view of the performances, see

my view been much exaggerated (cf. Bernstein 1998, 199f.), but there can be no doubt that special rules were attached to the performances: slaves were excluded, for one thing; and for the first time senators were separated from the rest of the audience, an early step towards the formal separation of the orders.[295] As I mentioned earlier, during the festival the aristocracy entertained one another to lavish banquets (*mutitationes*).[296] The circus games, which are known only from the Principate, included a procession at which the sacred stone and a statue of Cybele with her lions were paraded through the Circus on *fercula*, and possibly also evocations of or allusions to the rites, such as the *cista mystica* mounted upon Cybele's throne.[297] The population threw roses into the street to pave her way with joyful colour. It was at the *Megalensia* too that the *galli* were traditionally permitted to collect the money tossed into the street by the spectators: *aere atque argento sternunt iter omne viarum | largifica stipe ditantes*, (the people) strew her path with coins of copper and silver, bestowing upon her generous largesse.[298]

The March festival is a much more complex matter.[299] Although, as we have seen, many votive figurines of Attis have been discovered on the site of the Palatine temple, attesting to an intense popular concern

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Arnobius, *Adv.nat.* 4.38; cf. J.A. Hanson, *Roman Theater-Temples* (Princeton 1959) 13–16; Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 64.

[295] Livy 34.54.4–7; 36.36.3f.; Cicero, *de harusp. resp*. 24; cf. J. Colin, Les sénateurs et la Mère des Dieux aux Megalensia: Lucrèce IV, 79, *Athenaeum* 32 (1954) 346–55; Beard, North, Price 1998: 1, 97.

[296] See n. 135 above. For the Hellenistic institution of the δημοθοινία, to which this custom is presumably some sort of riposte, see P. Schmitt Pantel, *La cité au banquet. Histoire des repas publics dans les cités grecques.* CEFR 157 (Paris 1992) 255–424.

[297] Ovid, *Fasti* 4, 179–86 with Bernstein 1998, 201f.; the details are confirmed by iconographical evidence, viz. a late-antique sarcophagus-lid from Aquileia (stone); another in S. Lorenzo fuori le mura, Rome (statue); see N. Himmelmann, *Typologische Untersuchungen an römischen Sarkophagreliefs des 3. u. 4. Jhdts n.Chr.* (Mainz 1973) 37–42 with figs. 58a, 56b. As is well-known, a large statue of the Mater Magna wearing a mural crown and riding a lion stood on the spina of the Circus facing the Aventine; this was the case, at any rate, in the imperial period from the time of Trajan: Tertullian, *De spect*. 8; Vermaseren 1977, 51–4; J.H. Humphrey, *Roman Circuses: Arenas for Chariot-Racing* (London 1986) 273–77.

[298] Lucretius, *De rerum nat*. 2, 626f.; Ovid, *Fasti* 4.350–2; *Ep. ex Pont*. 1.1.39f.; cf. Cicero, *de leg*. 2.22; Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom*. 2.19.4f. with Boyancé 1972, 197f.

[299] The basic modern treatments, despite the problems connected with them, are Lambrechts 1952a; 1962, 42ff.; 1967; cf. earlier Hepding 1903, 145ff.; Graillot 1912, 108–49; Carcopino 1942, 49–75; 76–171; important later accounts are Fishwick 1966; 1967; Vermaseren 1977, 113–24; S. Fasce, Attis e il culto metroaco a Roma (Genua 1978). In what follows, I take over Vermaseren's criticisms of Lambrechts' rather rigid model of reforms solely under Claudius and Antoninus Pius.

with him, there is no mention of Attis as a god in literary sources of the Republic in the context of that site.[300] However, both Lucretius, *de rer. nat*. 2, 600–60 and Catullus 63, which is in 'gallic' galliambics and in form and subject related to popular mime, suggest there was already some knowledge of, and interest in, the Hellenistic account(s) in the late Republic. The *galli* were evidently familiar figures, implying that some sort of cult of Attis was practised.[301] On the basis of the conventional view of Augustus' distaste for foreign cults, it has been generally assumed, since the work of P. Lambrechts, that the basic form of the March festival emerged in the early Principate as a ritual of mourning for Attis and was formalised under Claudius.[302] A main argument was that, whereas the late-Republican and early-imperial calendars, such as the Fasti Antiates or the Fasti Maffeiani, list no public festival related to the Mater Magna towards the end of March, the *Menologium Colotianum*, of c. AD 50, does mention the *Lavatio*.[303] Both Peter Wiseman and the late Ilse Becher have however argued that the evidence of the Augustan poets by no means supports the idea that Augustus was hostile to the Phrygian cult as a whole.[304] There is thus no particular reason to date the emergence of the early stages of the March festival as late as Claudius. As we shall see, there is actually some archaeological evidence, quite apart from Ovid, *Fasti* 4, 179–372, to suggest that the goddess' bath was shifted away from the Palatine temple, and by implication moved to the Almo, already in the Augustan period.

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[300] See n. 137 above; also Varro, *Menipp*. frg. 150, p. 27 Astbury: *cum illoc venio, video gallorum frequentiam in templo dei*.… As I pointed out above, the position of Lambrechts 1952b and 1962 on this point is unsustainable; see the discussion by Thomas 1984, 1503f.

[301] Bremmer 2004, 558f.; cf. Harder 2004, 587f.; M. Fantuzzi and R. Hunter, *Muse e modelli* (Rome and Bari 2002) 558f.; for *fabulae togatae* called *Megalensia*, see Afranius, frg. 219f. Ribbeck = 222f. Daviault; Atta frg. 10f. = 11f. Daviault. Maecenas' piece on the myth of Attis, like Catullus', was in galliambics: Maecenas, frgs. 4f. Baehrens = 4 Lunderstedt = 5–6 Courtney (cf. n. 187 above). Courtney's second, anonymous, fragment: *rutilos recide crines habitumque cape viri*, urges a follower of Cybele, presumably a *gallus*, to abandon that life.

[302] Joh. Lydus, *de mens*. 4.59: τὴν ἑορτὴν (i.e. of the *Arbor intrat* on 22 March) Κλαύδιος ὁ βασιλεὺς κατεστήσατο.

[303] *CIL* I² p. 280f. (with p. 314) = VI 2305 = *ILS* 8745 = *InscrIt* XIII.2, 47 (p. 287). Given the nature of this unofficial calendar, it cannot be concluded that there were no other Metroac celebrations at this date. The traditional *Quinquatrus* (or *-ia*) were celebrated 19–23 March.

[304] Wiseman 1984; Becher 1991; Herbert-Brown 1994, 114f.; Bernstein 1998, 196f.

The March festival was no sort of ready-made construction according to an already-developed programme of ideas. Its scope grew over at least two centuries, probably more. It is in fact only in the mid-fourth century that we have reliable evidence, from the calendar of Filocalus (AD 354), for a fully-developed sequence between *Canna intrat* on 15th and the *Initium Caiani* on 28th.[305] This list, representing the final point of a long evolution whose details remain obscure, is as follows:

Id. Mart.	(15 March)	*Canna intrat*
XI K. Apr.	(22 March)	*Arbor intrat*
IX K. Apr.	(24 March)	*Sanguem*
VIII K. Apr.	(25 March)	*Hilaria*
VII K. Apr.	(26 March)	*Requietio*
VI K. Apr.	(27 March)	*Lavatio*.[306]

Rather than go through the list in its calendrical order, as is often still done, it seems preferable to emphasise here the extent to which the March festival was an historical construction subject to continual alteration and innovation, both in its elements and in the significance attached to them.[307]

The earliest festival seems to have been the *Lavatio*, which is mentioned already by Ovid as a popular occasion.[308] Since Romanelli discovered a sizeable basin (3.05m × 3.65m × 1.70m) lined with blocks of Grotta Oscura tufa in front of the Palatine temple, and framed by its steps, where the statue (or the stone) was apparently washed under the Republic, it is likely that the procession to the Almo was an Augustan innovation, that is, Ovid is alluding to something recent (yet another case of an Augustan invented tradition).[309] The sacred stone was taken from the Palatine temple to the Porta Capena in a procession that included the

[305] *CIL* I² p. 260 = *InscrIt* XIII.2, 42 (p. 243). It is doubtful whether the *initium Caiani* has in fact anything to do with the March festival, rather than with the *taurobolium* (the Gaianum was part of, or near, the Phrygianum): it is usually ignored (cf. Degrassi, p. 433 s.v. Mar. 28). Lambrechts inclined to think that the old *Megalensia* were replaced by the new festival, but this seems impossible (they are still listed in the Calendar of Filocalus).

[306] See Fishwick 1966, 193f.

[307] I here extend the point made after Lambrechts 1952b by both Fishwick 1966; 1967 and Vermaseren 1977, 13–24.

[308] Ovid, *Fasti* 4.339–42; cf. Mommsen ap. *CIL* I² p. 314. As Borgeaud 2004, 64 points out, the passage fuses the parade of 4th April with the later *Lavatio* in the Almo. For the other texts on the *Lavatio*, see Wissowa 1912, 319 nn. 4 and 7.

[309] Romanelli 1963, 303; Pensabene 1978; Becher 1991.

XVviri s.f.[310] Its course alluded to, without at all precisely following, the account of the goddess' reception in 204 BC associated with the *gens Claudia*: from the Porta Capena in the Servian Wall it proceeded down the Via Appia to the evidently small, rather insignificant, temple of the goddess on the right bank of the Almo, now the Aquataccio, a rivulet that flows sluggishly into the Tiber and from 7 BC marked the southern boundary of the Augustan Regio I (Porta Capena) of the city.[311] Here the statue and the sacred iron utensils were bathed τῶν Φρυγῶν νόμῳ, according to the Phrygian custom, by a priest, robed in red;[312] the *XVviri* prayed that the goddess might return safely to the Palatine; and the return journey, lit by torches, was the scene of gay rejoicing: *exululant comites, furiosaque tibia flatur, et feriunt molles taurea terga manus*.[313] If the *Lavatio* were indeed an Augustan innovation, we may assume that it was introduced at about the time of the Augustan rebuilding of the Palatine temple in AD 3 after a fire attended by a miracle,[314] and was officially intended to register the links between the Great Mother, Troy, the Sibylline oracles (now kept in the temple of Mars Ultor) and Roman invincibility, however it was understood by the *galli* or the mass of the population.[315]

So far as is known, the *Lavatio* never had anything to do with Attis, who is not mentioned in any of the relevant sources. Nevertheless there are clear signs of a shift in its significance. At latest in AD 140,

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[310] This of course was the college that supervised the Sibylline Books, which had originally commanded that the goddess be brought to Rome (Livy 29.10.4f.). The only evidence that the stone was set into a silver frame or decoration is Prudentius, *Perist.* 10.157, and is therefore suspect.

[311] For the course of the Servian walls and the approximate boundaries of the Augustan *regiones*, cf. Kolb 1995, 404 fig. 65.

[312] According to Ammianus Marcellinus, *RG* 23.3.7, the *carpentum*, the covered waggon, was also washed. Although Ammianus was sufficiently interested in the cult to write an entire excursus in his lost account of Commodus on the arrival of Cybele at Rome in 204 BC (22.9.5f.), this detail is probably a misunderstanding (he does say *perhibetur*); cf. R.L. Rike, *Apex omnium: Religion in the* Res gestae *of Ammianus* (Berkeley 1987) 49f.

[313] Ovid, *Fasti* 4.341f. (description of the supposed events of 204 BC; the *molles manus* that beat the drums are of course those of the *galli*); Lucan, *Bellum civ.* 1.600: *et lotam parvo revocant Almone Cybeben*; Valerius Flaccus, *Arg.* 8.239–42; Martial 3.47.2; Arrian, *Tact.* p. 33.4 Roos.

[314] Ovid, *Fasti* 4.437f.; Augustus, *RG* 19; Valerius Maximus, *Mem.* 1.8.11.

[315] It has been supposed that the washing was supposed to cleanse the stone of the blood of the *galli* (e.g. Vermaseren 1977, 121 but this is surely a false inference from Valerius Flaccus, *Arg.* 8.241: *quis modo tam saevos adytis fluxisse cruores cogitet?* No one doubts that the *vires* (mystic or real) were kept in the *penetrale*.

and no doubt somewhat earlier, a procession of the *collegium hastiferorum* was introduced, the spear-carriers of Ma Bellona.[316] By the fourth century, and probably much earlier (i.e. the second century), it had become attached, at least loosely, to a festival of Attis, celebrated on 22 and 24 March, and known, at least in the fourth century, as *Arbor intrat* and *Sangu(in)em*.[317] We must assume that these were the focus of mourning at this time for the death of Attis. The new *defixiones* from the temple of Isis and Magna Mater in Mainz, whose concern with the self-laceration of the *galli* and the *bellonarii* (the ecstatic followers of Ma Bellona, whom we know to have been closely associated with the cult of the Mater Magna) I have already mentioned, suggest the hypothesis that it may have been this sight, of the self-inflicted pain, the still-warm blood spattered on the ground to grow cold, that stimulated wide-spread interest in the cult of Attis, and eventually induced Claudius, if it was he, to mark this celebration officially.[318]

Arbor intrat centred upon the death of Attis beneath a pine-tree.[319] In its developed form, the members of the *collegium dendroph(or)orum* felled

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[316] The earliest inscription to mention the *hastiferi*, from Ostia, is dated 140: *AE* 1967: 74; the temple of Bellona there was constructed late in the reign of Hadrian. The repeated allusions in the Mainz *defixiones*, dated AD 70–c. 130) to *galli* and *bellonarii* imply that the connection was older. Herodian 1.10.5–7 shows that by the time of Commodus the emperor himself could be expected to be present at the procession in Rome, cf. Fishwick 1967, 148–50, 154–7 (I agree with Fishwick that the reference is to the return from the Almo, rather than the *Hilaria*, since there is no reason whatever to think that the latter was considered important enough to warrant the presence of the emperor). Schillinger 1979, 390f. takes the emperor's presence, perhaps rightly, as specific to Commodus himself, and thus not to be generalised.

[317] On the date of *Arbor intrat*: Julian, *Or.* 5.168b7 claims that the ritual was performed on the day of the spring equinox; the *Menologium* however specifically gives the date of the equinox in I[p] as 25 March, later the day of the Hilaria; and it appears from 171c that Julian had other reasons for wanting to link Attis with the equinox. Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.21.10 (in connection with the Hilaria) also dates the equinox to 25 March; Sallustius, περὶ θεῶν 4, p. 8.26f. Nock, carefully says 'about the time of … about the time of' (περί).

[318] E.g. Blänsdorf 2008, no. 18 l. 3f. *ita uti galli bellonarive absciderunt concideruntve*…: no. 16 l. 5f.: *quomodo] galli se secant et praecidunt vir[i]lia sua, sic ille*…; l. 9f.: *quomodo galli, bellonari, magal[i] sibi sanguin[em]ferventem fundunt, frigid[us] ad terram venit, sic*… l. 11f.: *quem]admodum de eis gallo[r]u[m, ma]galorum, bellon[ariorum—] spectat*… *sic et illi membra m[ed]ullae extabescant*. These *magali* are otherwise unknown, but they must be a similar group of ecstatic followers attached to the cult. The name is evidently derived from a fairly uncommon Greek appellation of Cybele, Μήτηρ μεγάλη (e.g. *CCCA* 2, 131 nos. 430f., from Lebadeia). *Bellonarii* is evidently a popular or slang term, like many words in *-arii*; for the assocation of Ma Bellona, Mater Magna and the *hastiferi*, see Fishwick 1967, 152–7.

[319] It is usually thought that a fragmentary relief found in Bordeaux in 1838 showing four muscular men manhandling a log depicts the *Arbor intrat*: *CCCA* 5, 145 no. 416;

the tree before dawn in the sacred grove, decorated it with woollen ribbons and wreaths of violets, and then carried it into the Palatine temple, where it lay (no doubt for days, or even weeks) withering. This ceremony was accompanied by scenes of violent grief.[320] Although the earliest epigraphic evidence dates from 9 April AD 79, the Greek name of the *dendrophori* clearly implies a much older institution.[321] The considerable number of votive plaques representing the dying god presumably attests to the intensity of worshippers' self-identification with his fate.[322] After an interval of one day, spent in mourning, *Sangu(in)em* commemorated the blood that flowed from Attis' self-inflicted wound: the *galli* and *bellonarii* processed through the streets lacerating their arms with knives and double-axes and lashing themselves with whips knotted with *astragali*.[323] It was generally believed that this was the day on which

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Vermaseren 1977 fig. 73. I think this very doubtful: the new Mainz defixio (see next note) specifically mentions the withering of the tree, which must therefore still have had its needles on; the great log shown in the Bordeaux relief is quite inappropriate. Rather, the Attis-relief from Glanum (*CCCA* 5, 117f. no. 344, pl. CXIX = Vermaseren 1977 pl. 63; see Pl. 20) shows the sort of thing required: a small, young pine behind the grand mythical pine of the main scene surely alludes to the tree of *Arbor intrat*.

[320] See Suet. *Otho* 8: *die quo cultores deum matris lamentari et plangere incipiunt*. All the other sources are fourth-century or later; the fullest is Arnobius, *Adv. nat.* 5.16 = Sanzi 2003, 283: Cybele no. 39.4; see also Julian, *Or.* 5, 168c; Firmicus Maternus, *De errore* 27.1; *Carmen c. paganos* 108; Joh. Lydus, *De mens.* 4.59. The detail about the tree withering is taken from an image in the Mainz *defixiones: ita uti arbor siccabit se in sancto, sic et illi siccet*. . .: Blänsdorf 2008 no. 18 l. 7.

[321] *CIL* X 7 (Regium Iulium), in honour of a number of women who had made gifts to the college. In Ostia, as elsewhere, although in the second century the *dendrophori* seem to have been an exclusively religious association, they later came to be closely connected to other workers in wood (*fabri tignarii*) and the *centonarii* (fire-brigade), e.g. *AE* 1987: 198f.; *AE* 1957: 80; *CIL* V 5128 = *AE* 1993: 800, cf. Rieger 2004, 168f. They continued to be a religious group into the late-Roman period, however, and were for this reason suppressed in AD 415 by Honorius (*CTheod.* 16.10.20). Although the patrons of the *collegium dendroph(or)orum* are of relatively high status, the known magistrates were socially insignificant: of those at Ostia, for example, none is known to have taken part in the municipal administration at any level (though one or two were Augustales), and none is known to have been a magistrate of any other *collegium* (which is another typical mark of good social standing): H.L. Royden, *The Magistrates of the Roman Professional Collegia in Italy (I–III AD)* (Pisa 1988) 57–9.

[322] See conveniently Vermaseren 1966, 30–44.

[323] The date is given by Tertullian, *apol.* 25.5 and *HA Claud.* 4.2 (*dies sanguinis*); I take it that Tertullian's *archigallus* is merely a high-sounding synonym of *gallus*. There is no other good source for the date (Lactantius, *inst.div.* 1.21.16f. gives none). For what it is worth, the *HA* claims that many members of the Senate were present in the temple on this day in AD 268; unfortunately it cannot be correct, since Claudius did not become emperor until Sept./Oct. of that year. This is not the only indication of parti pris in relation to Claudius' accession, cf. R. Syme, *Emperors and Biography: Studies in the Historia Augusta* (Oxford 1971) 204–6.

individuals might geld themselves. The symbolic aim however was to express the asymmetry of the bond between worshipper and divinity; the shedding of blood associates the worshipper with a sacrificial animal, the suffering body (these self-lacerations were undertaken every year) is presented as a palimpsestic text of devotion.[324] Probably on the evening of 24 March Attis was 'buried', which may be the occasion of the *mesonyctium*, the all-night vigil mentioned earlier.[325]

The earliest epigraphic evidence for the *cannofori* falls in the reign of Antoninus Pius, i.e. the second third of the second century. Most of it is later.[326] Fishwick rightly argued that *Canna intrat* formed a major part of the re-structuring of the March festival at this period: it was perhaps intended to extend the quasi-narrative sequence by creating an allusion to Attis being found by Cybele among the reeds of the river Gallus.[327] It is at any rate obvious that the ritual was calqued upon *Arbor intrat*: the *cannofori* cut bundles of reeds and ceremoniously carried them to the temple. There are again signs that the significance of the ritual altered over time: Joh. Lydus associates it with fertility, whereas Julian seems to link it with Attis' emasculation.[328] Perhaps of greater importance is the date: at a stroke, apparently, the length of the mourning and fasting period was extended by six days prior to *Arbor intrat*, perhaps once again under the influence of popular pressure.[329] On the other hand, we should recall that the festival of Anna Perenna, with its drunken merriment and amorous play, fell on the day immediately preceding *Arbor intrat* (21 March), so that we should not exaggerate the extent of

[324] Nevetheless I cannot understand Fishwick's claim (1967, 144) that the *dies sanguinis* was 'the climactic point of the festival of Magna Mater'. That was the *Lavatio*.

[325] *CCCA* 5: 133f. n. 386, pl. CXXXI, cited n. 216 above.

[326] Fishwick 1966, 637; Rieger 2004, 170: the earliest texts are again from Ostia: *CIL* XIV 40 = 4301 = Rieger MM62; and 117 = Rieger MM47.

[327] The only significant text is Julian, *Or.* 5 165b (Attis exposed at birth); Sallustius, περὶ θεῶν 4, p. 6.28 and 8.5f. Nock does not state that he was abandoned, merely that Cybele saw him by the river. There is an allusion to Attis hidden among the reeds of the river Gallus on the *modius* of M. Modius Maxximus from Ostia (see n. 169 above), with Attis in his Phrygian cap above between two reeds, and the bearded god below (Vermaseren 1977, 114; Beard 1994, 5f.).

[328] Joh. Lydus, *mens.* 4.49 (the mention of a six-year-old bull in a procession led by the ἀρχιέρευς [= ? *archigallus*?] however suggests some muddle with the *taurobolium*; but it may be correct); Julian, *Or.* 5, 168d.

[329] The Quinquatrus was evidently no longer of much importance, if indeed it ever had been.

general mourning at Rome—or even awareness that the March festival was being celebrated.[330]

The last festival to be introduced into the sequence was apparently the *Hilaria* (25 March).[331] There is no reference to it even as late as AD 136.[332] But in the mid-fourth century, perhaps under Christian pressure, it becomes an important theme in more sophisticated accounts of the March festival, such as that of Julian.[333] Here again, however, there are signs of varying interpretation.[334] Whereas Julian and his friend Sallustius refer the festival to the ascension of the individual worshipper's soul, the fifth-century neo-Platonist Isidorus son of Theodotes apparently thought it was a matter of being saved from Hades (ἐξ Ἅιδου σωτηρίαν).[335] These views are at least related; Firmicus Maternus' account (though it does not explicitly name the *Hilaria*) focuses upon Attis as a figure for the vegetative cycle, in particular of grain: it dies annually at the hands of the reaper, is sown again and annually comes back to life.[336] On the other hand, there is a certain amount of

[330] On the festival of Anna Perenna in the light of the new *defixiones* from her well beneath Piazza Euclide, see now T. Wiseman, The Cult-Site of Anna Perenna: Documentation, Visualization, Imagination, in L. Haselberger and J. Humphrey (eds), *Imaging Ancient Rome: Documentation—Visualization—Imagination*. JRA S61 (Portsmouth RI 2006) 51–62.

[331] And doubtless the *Requietio*, about which nothing is known, but which was evidently merely a bridge to the *Lavatio*. On the whole confused question, see CIL I^2 p. 312; Hepding 1903, 107–72; Graillot 1912, 131–6; Lambrechts 1952a; 1967. Fishwick 1967 and Vermaseren 1977, 119–23 are especially important and helpful discussions. Vermaseren's criticisms of the arguments of Lambrechts 1952a and 1967 are wholly justified (cf. Sfameni Gasparro 1985, 58 n. 137), even though he comes to much the same conclusion in practice.

[332] This is the probable date of Arrian's *Tactica*, where he gives a brief account of the March festival (see n. 313 above). I cannot accept Sfameni Gasparro's argument (1985, 57) that Val. Flaccus, *Arg.* 8.239–42 refers to expressions of joy, taken as an antecedent of the *Hilaria*, directly after the mourning—the passage explicitly refers to the *Lavatio*. She also cites (57 n. 131) *HA Sev. Alex*. 37.6 as evidence for the existence of the *Hilaria* in the third century. The parts of this life that derive from the Kaisergeschichte are indeed relatively reliable (Barnes 1970, 34–8), but other sections, and this chapter on his eating habits in particular, are full of bogus material: Barnes 1970, 33. *HA Aurel.* 1.1 is no less bogus.

[333] Or. 5, 169d; Sallustius, περὶ θεῶν 4, p. 8.25f. Nock; Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.21.10; Damascius, *Vit. Isidori* §131, p. 176 Zintzen.

[334] See also Cosi 1986, 107ff.; Lancellotti 2002, 135–42.

[335] There seems no reason to believe that these views go back, say, to Porphyry.

[336] *De errore* 3.2. In his commentary (3.3f.), Maternus himself studiously avoids talking about joy, emphasising only the mourning for the death; but it is implicit in this cycle-theory: *vitam rursus quod iacta semina annuis vicibus reconduntur*. As Lancellotti points out, however, we must beware of ancient 'exegeses of exegeses'—especially, but not only, Christian ones (2002, 138).

iconographic evidence, in the form of bronze and terracotta statuettes, hard to date but certainly from the High Principate at latest, and some surely (late) Hellenistic (found at Myrrhina), that represent Attis dancing.[337] Vermaseren argued that these represent Attis celebrating his return to life. Since this must have been an aspect of the mystery-teaching, however, and is treated as such by Julian and Sallustius, it seems improbable that it would have been so widely represented in vernacular art. In the same way, I see no reason to link images of winged Attis with the theme of resurrection. We should probably understand the late emergence of the *Hilaria* as a named festival as a response to neoplatonist and even Christian emphasis upon ascent/salvation, albeit on the basis of an element in the mystery experience that must be a good deal earlier.[338] It is difficult to go any further.

By far the most salient rituals connected with the cult of the Mater Magna at Rome were public ones. That is why we dispose of relatively large amounts of information concerning them. The negative side is that, insofar as initiation is concerned, almost no information survives, and what there is has been filtered through tendentious Christian writers. We may nevertheless argue that it was precisely the experience of repeated participation in specific, structured ritual performance, above all procession, mourning, fasting, and rejoicing—that is: fairly consistent formal features, legitimising notions and memory[339]—that encouraged the formation of what we might call a Metroac habitus, which in turn formed the basis for the desire on the part of a much smaller number to construct a dynamic emotional and ethical relationship with Attis through initiation, whatever quite we are to understand by that word here.[340] The best evidence we have for the importance of forming such a personal, quasi-mystical, relationship are the plaques representing Attis' self-gelding and death: in the one from Glanum illustrated

[337] Vermaseren 1966, 47–56.

[338] Cf. Bremmer 2002, 50–55.

[339] Granted the point made by A. Chaniotis that 'one cannot celebrate the same ritual twice' (2006, 234). In relation to the self-wounding of the followers of Isis at the *Isia*, Firmicus Maternus remarks: *veterum vulnerum resecant cicatrices ut annuis luctibus in animis eorum funestae ac miserandae necis exitium renascatur* (*de errore* 2.3). The body too is a palimpsest.

[340] As I mentioned earlier (see n. 294), it is probable that under the Principate there were performances re-telling at least some of the story of Attis at the *Megalensia* too, thus providing both a link between the two festivals and a modicum of information within the population of Rome. Otherwise however the *ludi* are better understood in the context of Republican Roman religion.

here (Pl. 20), as commonly, the intended relationship is implied by the god's frontal gaze out of the picture-plane towards the spectator. The institutional expression of that commitment is surely membership in the collegia of *dendrofori*, *cannofori*, and *hastiferi*, which are quite widely recorded in Italy and the western empire (Schillinger 1979, 312–32). The *taurobolium* on the other hand represents the integration of the public role of Metroac cult with the desire for a special form of individual emotional commitment among the curial and sub-curial class. Under some limited and unusual circumstances, the same desire might reach expression in the longing for a radical separation from the world of common social reciprocity, in the act of self-gelding—itself considered a form of 'mystery'. But this extreme choice must always have been attractive only to a few.

4. Rituals in the Egyptian Cults

For lack of evidence, it is virtually impossible to reconstruct the rituals peculiar to the cult of Serapis.[341] We are not justified in simply transferring to his cult the fairly extensive information we possess for the cult of Isis. For we do not in fact know what sort of relation there subsisted in daily practice between the two: although we speak of 'the cult of Isis and Serapis', they often appear separately both in the iconography and in inscriptions. We can affirm neither that they were separate nor that they were worshipped without much discrimination between them.[342] We can only say that they do often appear together in votive inscriptions throughout the Principate, and that they often appear conjointly, especially on lamps.[343] We cannot however specify how this coexistence was figured in practice. We do not know whether the adherents of the one god also worshipped the other, how far offerings and votives were directed to them jointly, or even if temples at those sites where there were no separate shrines were normally dedicated to

[341] The Menologium Colotianum (see n. 303) records the *Serapia* for April; it seems still to have been celebrated in the third and fourth centuries, since the Calendar of Filocalus dates it 25 April (CIL I^2 p. 259 = *RICIS* 501/0221). It is however otherwise completely unknown.

[342] So rightly Dunand 1973, 1: 79f.

[343] Malaise 1972a, 198.

them jointly.[344] My own inclination is to think that they did normally function as a pair;[345] but there are some problems with such a view.

We know that some temples at least were dedicated to one of them alone: Pausanias for example tells us that on the way up to Acrocorinth there were two shrines to Isis, one called Pelagia, the other Egyptian; and two to Serapis, one of them 'in Canopus' (2.4.6).[346] This case highlights another point that has received relatively little attention, that differentiation such as this corresponds to the amount of stress laid on the Egyptian or Greek nature or aspect of the divinity in each case.[347] Thus Isis may be worshipped specifically as *Aegyptia*, *Memphitis* or *Bubastis*, Serapis as ἐν Κανώπῳ or Νειλάγωγος; on the other hand, Serapis may be ἐν Ναυπάκτῳ or ἐν Πόρτῳ while Isis may receive Graeco-Roman epithets such as *Capitolina*, *Augusta*, *euploia*, *Pharia* or *pelagia*, which latter are found along the Mediterranean littoral, or on islands, where this particular cult was most intensively practised.[348] The case at Acrocorinth also suggests that each temple must have had

[344] This seems often to have been the case in Italy (Malaise 1972a, 135); in the Iberian peninsula there are joint temples at Ampurias and Cartagena (Alvar 1993c), but not in the case of the Isea at Italica and Claudia Baelo: J. Alvar and E. Muñiz, Les cultes égyptiens dans les provinces romaines d'Hispanie, in Bricault 2004b, 69–94.

[345] Many scholars, such as Merkelbach 1995, 86f. §151f.: 'als heilige Familie abgebildet', have simply assumed that Isis, Serapis and Harpocrates really did function as a sort of 'holy family', pointing to cases such as the bronze plaque in the Antiquarium at Pompeii, which shows Sarapis and Isis standing right and left of a base or pedestal on which Harpocrates stands holding a cornucopiae: see Tran tam Tinh 1983, 107 no. IB 2; 1990 no. 167; Merkelbach 1995, pl. 68; or the relief from the Via della Conciliazione now in the Museo Capitolino, showing Sarapis enthroned in the centre, flanked by Harpocrates and Isis on the spectator's right and Demeter to the left: Helbig[4] 2 no. 1185 = Merkelbach 1995, 608 fig. 138 = Bottini 2006, 254f. no. 62. In fact the triad Serapis-Isis-Anubis is epigraphically much more common (see *RICIS* 2: 774f.), but nobody dreams of calling this collocation a 'holy family'.

[346] Cf. the temple in Sicily, *celeberrimum et frequentissum* but otherwise unknown, where Verres erected his own statues (Cicero, *IIVerr*. 2.160). It was dedicated to Serapis alone.

[347] On the hellenisation of Isis, see Malaise 2000, stressing the greater depth and intensity of the 'hellenising' evidence.

[348] "Sanctuaries of Isis or the Great Gods of Samothrace help map the networks of redistribution in the period of their popularity": Horden and Purcell 2000, 442. As a matter of fact, however, as I have mentioned already (nn. 114f. above), the epithet *pelagia* occurs as such only five times, though there are several images on relief and on specially-formed lamps (Bruneau 1961; 1963; 1974; Blanchaud 1984; Tran tam Tinh 1990, 794; Bricault 2006a, 84–90). There is however a fine glass gem now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (inv. AS IX a 991), showing Isis Fortuna with the Pharos 'lighthouse': *Mostra Iside* no. IV 239 = *Ausstellung Liebighaus* 683f. no. 286 (M. Pfrommer). On the Egyptian epithets, see now Bricault 2005a.

its own particular character and that the rituals observed must have differed from one to the other: given that they were so close together, there would have been no point in reproducing the same rituals in all four. They must have arranged things differently between one another, and similarly with the temple at Cenchreae, the Saronic Gulf (eastern) port of Corinth, no distance from Acrocorinth, which is the setting of Apuleius, *Met.* Book 11.[349]

Serapis is mentioned just once in this narrative, in the context of the flamboyant description of the procession to celebrate the *Isidis navigium*: *ibant et dicati magno Serapi tibicines, qui per obliquum calamum adaurem porrectum dexteram familiarem templi deique modulum frequentabant.*[350] The fact that these flautists had nothing to do with Isis seems clear from the words *dicati magno Serapi* and *familiarem templi deique modulum*: this was music specific to Serapis and his temple in Cenchreae. It might be urged that the later references to Osiris are in reality to Serapis.[351] But it is obvious that in Apuleius' view the two divinities are quite different: the initiation into the mysteries of Osiris has nothing to do with Serapis, and is furthermore quite separate from that undertaken for Isis. All this inclines me to think we should not rush to conclusions but assume that they were sometimes worshipped together or jointly, sometimes separately.

Be that as it may, there can be no question that our information about ritual practice in relation to the Isiac group of divinities (including Anubis, Harpocrates, Osiris and Horus), here called 'the Egyptian cults', greatly exceeds that for either of the other two cults here discussed. This also explains why they have been the focus of much more academic discussion. On the other hand, we would do well to reflect

[349] For the arguments in favour of identifying the apsidal building on the western side of the south mole as the Iseum, see Scranton, Shaw and Ibrahim 1978, 53–78; Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2000, 167–71; Scranton and Ramage 1967, 138–52 refer to the partly-submerged building simply as 'the sanctuary'. A brief account of the temple at Kenchreai, and a plan, in Bommas 2005b, 319–21.

[350] "Pipers dedicated to Serapis who, on transverse pipes held close to the right ear, repeated the traditional melody of the god and his temple": Apuleius, *Met.* 11.9, tr. J.A. Hanson.

[351] As in Lactantius, *Inst. div.* 1.21.22: "This is the Osiris whom people call Serapis or Serapides" (tr. A. Bowen). This is simply a *suggestio falsi*, as is plain from e.g. the self-predication of Karpokrates from Chalkis in Euboea: Καρποκράτη, Σαράπιδι, ἀκοαῖς Ἴσιδος, Ὀσείριδι ἐπηκόῳ: *RICIS* 104/0206 l. 1 = Totti 1985, 15 no. 6. Lactantius himself notices that something is wrong, and hastily explains: "Names usually get changed when the dead are deified".

on the possible costs of such heavy reliance upon a single, contested, text, Apuleius, *Met.* Book 11.

a. *Festivals*

The cult of Isis as celebrated outside Egypt represented an extreme simplification of the colourful surfeit of festivals, pan-Egyptian, regional and highly local, relating to Osiris, Horus, Isis and Anubis in the pre-Ptolemaic and Ptolemaic period.[352] The Graeco-Roman reception observed just two major festivals a year,[353] only one of which, the *Isea*, was important in Egypt itself.[354] This itself attests to the extent to which what the Graeco-Roman world received as 'Egyptian religion' was a highly selective, and constantly re-interpreted, version of the original.[355]

The first, which I have already mentioned, is the *Isidis navigium*, whose Greek name was τὰ μέγαλα Πλοιαφέσια.[356] At least in the later empire, it was held on 5 March.[357] Here Isis was made known as the protector of navigation, whose annual season formally opened on that day,

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[352] Cf. *POxy* 1380 l. 202 = Totti 1985, 62ff. no. 20: Ἰσεῖα πάσει[ς] πόλεσιν εἰς τὸν [ἅπαν]τα χρόνο[ν κατ]έσ[τ]ησας (many letters uncertain), with the list of sites in ll. 1–74; Bilabel 1929; Dunand 1973, 1: 110–62; 207–44. The use of the word Ἰσεῖα is itself a mark of the Hellenisation of such events in the Ptolemaic period.

[353] Cf. Merkelbach 1963, 39–41 (the link with earlier Egyptian festivals is totally unconvincing, however, cf. Perpillou-Thomas 1993); 1995, 147–86 (very adventurous).

[354] There were three major pan-Egyptian Isiac-Osirian festivals (on the dates, it should be remembered that the traditional Egyptian (Sothic) calendar was mobile, every month slowly altering its location in the seasons of the solar year, so that the actual date varied; after 199 BC, intermittent attempts were made to celebrate festivals on a fixed day, appointed with reference to the solar calendar, cf. Bickerman 1980, 40f.): that of the onset of the Nile flood, nominally on 1 Thoth of the Sothic year (= 25 Epeiph = 19 July Julian); the harvest-festival, on 1 Pachon of the Alexandrian calendar (26 April); and the Khoiak festival (Dunand 1973, 1: 217; F. Daumas, s.v. Choiakfeste, *LÄg* 1 [1975] 958–60). Only the last, it seems, was commonly observed outside Egypt.

[355] This was nothing new: there is plenty of evidence (e.g. Herodotus 2.61) that the Greeks in Egypt from an early point selected and adapted Egyptian religious institutions and practices to suit themselves.

[356] RICIS 114/0703 (Byzantium); Apuleius, *Met.* 11.17. The Latin name is attested only by the Menologium Colotianum (*CIL* I² p. 280f. = VI 2305 = *ILS* 8745 = *InscrIt* XIII.2, 17 = *RICIS* 501/0219) and the Calendar of Filocalus (*CIL* I² p. 256ff. = *RICIS* 501/0221).

[357] Lactantius, *Inst. div.* 1.11.21; CIL I² p. 260 (Filocalus); Joh. Lydus, *Mens.* 4.45; I can find no evidence in support of Merkelbach's claim (1995, 157 §291) that the date at one time varied according to the full-moon, for which anyway he provides no citation. Wissowa thought it likely that it was introduced at Rome at much the same time as the Isia, i.e. under Caius (1912, 354).

when prayers were offered on behalf of those who plied it that the sea remain calm, and yield up its harvest once more.[358] As Isis *pelagia*, she was proclaimed mistress of the sea, inventor of navigation and protector of sailors.[359] The goddess was thus linked to the encouragement and protection of trade (Apuleius, *Met.* 11.5):

> *Diem qui dies ex ista nocte nascetur aeterna mihi nuncupavit religio, quo sedatis hibernis tempestatibus et lenitis maris procellosis fluctibus, navigabili iam pelago rudem dedicantes carinam primitias commeatus libant me sacerdotes*.[360]

At the same time, the *navigium* recalled Isis' voyage in search of her husband/brother Osiris. It was this that allowed her worshippers to address their prayers to her as Isis Fortuna, and thus all the more able to intervene in aid of sailors, merchants and travellers of all sorts who needed to cross the sea. The institutionalisation of this festival is an excellent illustration of the extent to which the Egyptian cults managed to integrate themselves into the ideological superstructure of the Graeco-Roman city: an essentially foreign deity, from a culture regarded at best with ambivalence, gradually turning into a protector

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[358] Although the idea of a Mediterranean sailing season was conventional (e.g. Vegetius, *epit. rei mil.* 4.39, dating it from 27 May until 14 September), there seems always to have been a good deal of sailing activity even in autumn and winter: Horden and Purcell 2000, 142f. Aelius Aristides, for example, went by sea from Rome to Miletus and Smyrna in mid-winter AD 144 after his intestines swelled up and he had to return home (*Or.* 48 = *Sacred Tales* 2.5.60–9; on the date see Swain 1996, 265).

[359] The theme occurs twice in the self-predications: Cyme etc. (Totti 1985, 1 no. 1 = *RICIS* 302/0204 etc.) §15 and 39; cf. Andros (Totti 1985, 5 no. 2 = *RICIS* 202/1801) l. 34f. On the *navigium* in general, see Witt 1971, 165ff.; Malaise 1972a, 217–21; Dunand 1973, 3: 223–30; Griffiths 1978, 31–46; Turcan 1992a, 114f. Stern 1953, 225 rightly rejected the claim by D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements, 1* (Princeton and London 1947) 37; 164f. that one of these mosaics represents the *navigium*, but considered that it might be the subject of the well-known Isiac procession now in the Vatican (Helbig[4] 1, no. 491 = Cumont 1929, pl. VIII.1 = Merkelbach 1995, 615 fig. 145) (see Pl. 22 here). Malaise 1972a, 221 suggested that the festival may have been represented on the walls of the Isiac temples of Pompeii, Ostia, Herculaneum and on the Aventine, cf. Tran tam Tinh 1964, 100f. On the whole subject, see now Bricault 2006b. There is an interesting marble boat at Beneventum that originally represented Isis standing in it, of whom only one foot survives (Malaise 1972b, 300 Beneventum no. 15, with pl. 57/8 = *Ausstellung Liebighaus* p. 402 fig. 6, I[a]).

[360] "The day which will be the day born from this night has been proclaimed mine by everlasting religious observance: on that day, when the winter's tempests are lulled and the ocean's storm-blown waves are calmed, my priests dedicate an untried keel to the now navigable sea and consecrate it as the first fruits of voyaging", tr. Hanson.

of sea-going communication.[361] This is an important example of the assimilative capacity of Roman religion: it has been plausibly suggested, for example, that images of Isis with cornucopiae and steering-oar evoke the *annona* brought annually from Alexandria to Rome.[362] At the same time, the festival is also an expression of the cult's alterity: though its theme was so central, it was staged not by the civic magistrates but by the priesthood and the members of the relevant *collegia* and *sodalicia*, the *pastophori*, ἱεραφόροι, Εἰσιακοί, Ἰσιασταί, Σαραπιασταί, Συνανουβιασταί and all the other groups occasionally mentioned in the epigraphy. This evident support for the common good affirmed the commitment to the public weal of a group otherwise unable to take a leading part in civic rituals. The Egyptian cults thus demonstrated their unequivocal commitment to social order and solidarity, their superficial alterity notwithstanding.[363]

The festival consisted essentially of a procession down to the shoreline to mark the first sailing of the new year.[364] Apuleius first describes the procession, in all its colourful variety (11.7–11). After an interlude in which Lucius is turned back into a man (11.12–15) the procession reaches the shore:

> There, after the images of the gods had been set in their proper places, the chief priest (*summus sacerdos*) consecrated a ship, which was constructed with fine craftsmanship and decorated all over with marvellous Egyptian pictures. He took a lighted torch, an egg, and sulphur, uttered prayers of great solemnity and reverent lips, and purified the ship thoroughly, naming it and dedicating it to the goddess. The gleaming sail of this holy barque bore an inscription woven in letters of gold, whose text renewed the prayer for prosperous navigation during the new sailing season. Now

[361] There is as yet no evidence at Rome or in Italy for the celebration of the *Isidis navigium* already in the Roman Republic: for example, the supposed Isis *euploia* or *pelagia* on a late-III^{p} types from Syracuse is probably an Aphrodite: Sfameni Gasparro 1993 [1995], 90–2. However the festival surely came from the Hellenistic Greek world; the obvious source would be Delos, where the Serapea and the Iseum were sacked in 88 BC, and only the Iseum rebuilt (Dunand 1973, 2: 98f.).

[362] Bricault 2000a, 141f.; 2006b, 83–84; 171f.; cf. earlier Malaise 1972a, 181; Bruneau 1974, 381.

[363] For one approach to the political instrumentalisation of Isiac festivals, see Hidalgo 1995.

[364] The procession carrying images of gods from one temple, to another, or around the countryside, was one of the typical ritual modes of Egyptian religion: Dunand 1973, 1: 210–12; U. Rösler-Köller, s.v. Götterbesuch, *LdÄ* 2: 669–71; Frankfurter 1998, 38f.; 52–58. The *Isidis navigium* however represents a significant variation upon this pattern (Bricault 2006b, 134–150).

> rose the mast, a round pine, high and resplendent, visible from afar off with its conspicuous masthead. The stern curved in a goose-neck and flashed lightning from its coating of gold-leaf … Then all the people, worshippers and uninitiated alike (*tam religiosi quam profani*), outdid one another in loading the ship with baskets heaped with spices and similar offerings, and on the waves they poured libations of grain-mash made with milk. When the ship was laden with generous gifts and auspicious sacrifices, it was untied from its anchor-ropes and offered to the sea, as a mild breeze rose specially for her. After her course had taken her so far that we could no longer clearly make her out, the bearers of the sacred objects (*sacrorum geruli*) took up again what each had brought and joyfully set out on the way back to the shrine, preserving the order and fine appearance of their procession.
>
> *Met.* 11.16, tr. Hanson (adapted)

Once the cortège has returned to the temple, the ritual proceedings are brought to a close. The chief priest (προφήτης, ἱερογραμματεύς), the ἱεραφόροι and those already initiated enter the *penetralia* and replace the divine statues in their proper places. The priest then summons the *pastophori* (who did not count as priests), and presumably the remainder of the participants in the procession, and reads prayers, evidently in Latin, for the safety of the emperor, the state, all mariners and their vessels.[365] He then performs a short ceremony in Greek formally to inaugurate the new sailing-season. The audience breaks out into acclamations, and its members push forward to lay greenery at the feet of the goddess' silver statue and kiss her feet (*exosculatis vestigiis deae*).[366] They then disperse back home, filled with a sense of joy (Apuleius, *Met.* 11.17).[367] Although the scene is set at Cenchreae, we may assume that the festival at Ostia or Portus, where an important group of Alexandrian shippers connected with the *annona* was based, was broadly similar.[368] No doubt at Rome the procession simply went down to the Tiber: Isis was also mistress of rivers.

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[365] Cf. n. 28 above.

[366] For similar acclamations after a festival, see Chaniotis 2006, 233f., citing *LSCG* 51 (Iobakchoi), with A. Schäfer, Raumnutzung und Raumwahrnehmung im Vereinslokal der Iobakchen von Athen, in Egelhaaf-Gaiser and Schäfer 2002, 173–220 at 188.

[367] Cf. Chaniotis 2006, though, focusing on sacred laws, he does not cite this case.

[368] Cf. e.g. *RICIS* 503/1207, 1215, 1216, 1217; Meiggs 1973, 279; 387. A Roman festival of (Isis) *Pharia* is recorded for April by the *Menologium Colotianum* (*RICIS* 501/0219), but not entered in the Calendar of Filocalus. How it differed from the *Isidis navigium* is quite unknown.

The origins of the *Isidis navigium* are obscure. At Philae in Upper Egypt there was a festival which involved transportation on a litter of the 'boat of Isis', decorated with her image fore and aft.[369] This boat was both a cult object and in some sense identified with the goddess herself; and it was closely associated with the celestial voyage of the Sun-god Re. Both at Philae and at Abydos, there were other boats that brought Osiris to his sister/wife but were also in some sense identified with Isis (Dunand 1973, 1: 215). These may be linked with the 'navigation of Osiris' known from the Canopus decree and a well-known inscription from Thessalonike, a poem by Damaios dated c. 120 BC.[370] The most important antecedent of the Graeco-Roman festival is implied by an inscription from Eretria of the first century BC recording a dedication to Serapis, Isis, Osiris, Anubis and Harpokrates by T. Septomios Ptolemaios Damos and his wife or sister Septomia Antiochis, ναυαρχήσαντες.[371] It seems likely that when Isis' solar boat and/or that of Osiris were received in the Aegean, via trading contacts with Alexandria and/or the Delta cities, a creative misinterpretation occurred that transformed them into a novel competitor for the Great Gods, an opportunity taken up and extended by the colporteurs.[372]

The other annual festival took place between 28 October and 3 November. At least according to the Calendar of Filocalus, it bore the overall name *Isia*.[373] As Mommsen already argued, it was based on the Egyptian festival of Khoiak (which was celebrated in December) shifted, presumably because of the exigencies of the Alexandrian civil calendar, to 19 Hathyr = 15 November Julian.[374] It was doubtless first

[369] *P. dem. Heidelberg.* 736 ap. W. Speigelberg, *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache u. Altertumskunde* 1917, 33f.; Dunand 1973, 1: 211–4.

[370] *OGIS* I no. 56 l. 41 and 54; IG X.2: 108 ll. 2f.= Totti no. 72 = *RICIS* 113/1506.

[371] *IG* XII Suppl. 565 = *RICIS* 104/0111, cf. Dunand 1973, 2: 26. The stele is decorated with two crowns.

[372] Analogous to the creative misunderstanding that turned St. Leonard, a saint of prisoners, into the protector of livestock, esp. horses.

[373] *CIL* I^2 p. 274, 276 = *RICIS* 501/0221 (giving 28–31 Nov. and 1 Dec. only); Joh. Lydus, *de mens*. 4.48 gives the last day as 3 November, the date of the *Hilaria* = *Heuresis* of the Menologium (Stern 1968). The painted calendar of S. Maria Maggiore (early IV^p), published in 1972, gives *Luct(us) Isidis* (so Stern) for 28 October, but the festival might evidently begin somewhat earlier, between 25–28: Stern 1973; *RICIS* 501/0220.

[374] *CIL* I^2 p. 336, cf. Wissowa 1912, 353f.; on the contradictory Egyptian evidence concerning the date, see Parker 1950, 41; Griffiths 1970, 312; 448f.; Dunand 1973, 1: 227f.; Perpillou-Thomas 1993, 94–100. Of the two current spellings, Athyr (Egyptologists) and Hathyr (papyrologists), I choose the latter.

introduced at Rome in the late Republic (cf. Ovid, *Met*. 9.693f.), but may have been first established in the calendar around AD 25 and 28;[375] if so, it must have preceded Caius' hypothetical (re-)building of the Iseum Campense.[376] The festival was essentially a ritual staging of the myth of Isis and Osiris. Such stagings cannot have been anything unusual, if we can go by the anecdote told by Suetonius concerning the eve of the murder of Caius, that is, the night of 23/4 January AD 41: *parabatur et in noctem spectaculum, quo argumenta inferorum per Aegyptios et Aithiopas explicarentur* (*Caius* 57.4).[377] Such performances evidently reproduced in different forms the central events of a narrative that purported to explain the order of the cosmos and the system of Isiac beliefs (see Chap. 2.1.a). The first part of the festival was devoted to the passion (*luctus*) of Isis, her desperate search for her husband/brother. The worshippers shaved their heads, beat their breasts and slashed their arms as they made as if to hunt for Osiris, until they finally 'found' him.[378] The poem by Damaios from Thessalonike, mentioned earlier, clearly alludes to the joy of Isis when the body of Osiris is found.[379] According to Plutarch, whose account is not readily reconcilable with the Roman reports but seems to be partly based on the ritual followed at Dendera in Upper Egypt, the priests went down to the sea, took a golden casket from the sacred κίστη that apparently contained the head of Osiris, poured some water into it, and the onlookers cried εὑρημένου τοῦ Ὀσίριδος. A statuette of earth, water and spices was then made,

[375] Stern 1968; Lembke 1994, 67; 89f.; Takács 1995, 90. Seneca, *Apocol*. [*Ludus*] 13, written c. AD 54, assumes that his readers will be perfectly familiar with the Isiasts' cry εὑρήκαμεν, συγχαίρωμεν (slightly misquoted by Σ Juv. 8.29f.). It is thought that the μελανηφόροι played a major part in these mourning rituals.

[376] Besides supplying a fanciful reconstruction of the Iseum (p. 149 fig. 5), due to his apparent ignorance of the standard work on the topic (Lembke 1996), Cavalieri 2005, 148–54 seems to me to overemphasise its role as a carrier of Domitianic dynastic propaganda in pursuance of his general argument.

[377] Josephus, *AJ* 19.1.12–14, §84f., 94 and 101 indicates that the murder took place after Caius had left the theatre on the Palatine.

[378] Seneca, *de superstitione* (ap. Aug., *De civ. Dei* 6.10.46 Dombart-Kalb): *cum perditio eius inventioque fingatur*; idem, ap. Servius, *ad Aen*. 6.154 (= Sanzi 2003, 90: Isis no. 11.3); Minucius Felix, *Octav*. 22.1; Tertullian, *adv. Marc*. 1.13:… *Osirin, quod semper sepelitur et in vivido quaeritur et cum gaudio invenitur*; Lactantius, *inst. div*. 1.21.20; Firmicus Maternus, *de errore* 2.2f.; etc.

[379] *IG* X.2, 108 ll. 3f. = Totti no. 72 = *RICIS* 113/0506: καὶ τεύχεις ἐρατὴν Ἶσιν ἐν ἀγλαΐαις; cf. R. Merkelbach, Zwei Texte aus dem Sarapeum zu Thessalonike, *ZPE* 10 (1973) 45–54 at 45–9.

which was dressed and treated as Osiris.[380] This done, there followed, at least at Rome, three further days of rejoicing at Isis' success, culminating in the *Hilaria* on 3 November.[381]

In this connection, Firmicus Maternus cites writers who gave the myth a rationalising twist by linking the search directly with the natural cycle: *hanc volunt esse mortem Osyridis cum fruges reddunt, inventionem vero cum fruges genitalis terrae fomento conceptae annua rursus coeperint procreatione generari*.[382] This scheme is clearly bound up with the cycle of Egyptian agriculture: before the building of the modern dams, the Nile began to rise around the summer solstice in June and reached its maximum height at the end of August/early September.[383] By the middle to end of October the river had returned to its bed; the redistribution of land and the sowing took place as it subsided.[384] Given the heat of Egypt (the new growing season for olives and vines began in January), this meant that the first shoots would have appeared about the time of the Hathyr festival.[385]

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[380] *De Iside* 39, 366f., cf. Dunand 1973, 1: 236f. However, the detail of going to the sea implies either an immediate source set at Alexandria, Canopus, or elsewhere along the coast of the Delta ('il est probable que le culte de la déesse protectrice des marins était pratiqué sur tout le littoral', Dunand 1973, 1: 114, though there is no reason to follow her in thinking that there was also a cult of Isis on Cape Lochias, cf. Malaise 2005, 149f.), or we might envisage a source familiar with one of the rituals observed in Greece or the coast of Asia Minor, say at Eretria, Cios in Bithynia or Byzantium.

[381] On the 2 Nov. the *ter novena* was held, perhaps sung by three choirs of nine members: Wissowa 1912, 354.

[382] "They claim that the death of Osiris coincides with the time of year when the seed is placed in the gound, and the 'discovery' of the god with that when the grain that has germinated in the soil's gentle warmth begins to form, in keeping with the annual cycle of growth": *De errore* 2.6., retaining with Turcan the *reddunt* of the *ms.* (see the apparatus on p. 80); cf. Athenagoras, *leg.* 22. This theory bears a family resemblance to those offered by Plutarch, *De Iside* 32, 363de; 33, 364ab; 38, 366ab with Griffiths 1970, 419f.; 424; 445; see more fully Turcan 1982a, 184f. As god of the dead, Osiris had the power to renew life, and gradually acquired the attributes of both Ḥ'apy, the Nile-god, and Neper (or Nepri), the corn-god.

[383] See the lucubrations of Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 36.19–63, which gives an excellent idea of ancient speculations in this area. One of the major Egyptian festivals of Isis and Osiris was the feast marking the beginning of the flood proper on 1 Thoth = 19 July (Heliodorus, *Aethiop.* 9.9); so far as we know, however, it was not celebrated outside Egypt: Dunand 1973, 1: 217–19.

[384] N. Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule* (Oxford 1983) 115f.; P.W. Pestman, *The New Papyrological Primer*[5] (Leyden 1990) chart on p. 314; S.J. Seidlmayer, s.v. Nil, *DNP* 8 (2000) 942–4; Meeks and Favret-Meeks 1996, 168f. In favoured areas with the means of reserving water, two crops could be sown each season.

[385] Preparations for the grain harvest in Egypt began in February; the grain was cut in late March-April. In Egypt there were traditionally only three seasons, each related to the level of the Nile: Inundation; Sinking; Deficiency (Bickerman 1980, 40).

There is however good reason to think that different views of the significance of the festival co-existed, both within Egypt (for example, there was another 'finding' at Heliopolis, another at Soknopaiou Nesos, above Lake Moeris in the Fayyûm)[386] and without, where such divergence was prompted, at least partly, by the disparity in climatic conditions between (Upper) Egypt and those of the middle-Mediterranean. Plutarch reveals that an interpretation such as Firmicus Maternus records was counter-intuitive at the latitude of Greece and Italy, where of course November meant the onset of colder, cloudy weather: he offers an account that associates the disappearance of Osiris with a series of analogous 'disappearances': the fall of the Nile, the cessation of the Etesian winds, the lengthening of the nights after the equinox, and the trees' loss of leaves.[387] None of the last three items applies with any force to the valley of the Nile. There were other views too: Pausanias was told by a Phoenician that the search for Osiris and Isis' lamentation took place as the Nile flooded, and that 'many of the indigenous Egyptians' say that the flood is caused by her tears; Minucius Felix and Lactantius thought she mourned for her baby son.[388]

If the meaning of the festivals varied from place to place, so did the manner of celebration. In parts of the Aegean, the procession centred upon the carrying of torches, and was called (at least in Priene) ἡ λαμπαδεία.[389] From Pausanias we learn that some 110 stades (= 66,000 Greek 'feet') from Tithorea in Phthiotis, on the northern face of Parnassus, there was an especially holy (ἁγιώτατον) sanctuary of Isis that could only be visited by special invitation through a dream sent by the

[386] That at Heliopolis is mentioned by Plutarch, *de Iside* 52, 372c, in the context of the solar associations of Osiris; the *Charmosyna* at Soknopaiou Nesos: *BGU* 1 no. 1 l. 23 with Bilabel 1929, 14; 34f.

[387] Plutarch, *De Iside* 33, 366ef, with Griffiths 1970, 448. Although various winds were so called (Pliny, *HN* 2.127, cf. A. Rehm, s.v. Etesiai, *RE* 6 [1907] 713f.), the best-known Etesian winds are an Aegean phenomenon. They were generally reckoned to begin around the heliacal rising of Sirius (= Sothis) in mid-July and last 30–40 days. It is possible that Plutarch's source was thinking of the various theories, beginning with Thales', that the Etesians caused the Nile flood by pushing back the waters from the Delta, cf. Rehm 1936, 579–81. This again, however, is an external perception. The Tropic of Cancer crosses Egypt around 120 km south of Aswan; 25° N of latitude passes through Edfu.

[388] Pausanias 10.32.18; Min. Felix, *Octav.* 22.1, cf. Lactantius, *Inst. div.* 1.21.20.

[389] Athens: *IG* II/III^2 4771 = *RICIS* 101/0221 (c. AD 120); 4773 = *RICIS* 101/0226; Delos, Serapeum C: *RICIS* 202/0209 col. i ll. 7, 22, 27; Priene: *IPriene* no. 195 l. 13, 14 = *RICIS* 304/0802.

goddess (10.32.9).[390] There were however two grand three-day festivals, one in spring, the other in autumn (perhaps roughly corresponding to the *navigium* and the *Isia*, but different in duration): on the first day, the sanctuary was cleansed in a manner that may not be revealed (τρόπον τινὰ ἀπόρρητον) and cleared of all animal offerings remaining from the previous festival, which had to be buried at a distance. On the second day, the stall-holders build their stalls; in the morning of the third day the fair is held (including a cattle and a slave market); the afternoon is given over to sacrificing, at which the offering of sheep, goats and pigs was forbidden.[391] The rich sacrificed cattle and deer, the poor less expensive victims, καὶ χῆνας καὶ ὄρνιθας τὰς μελεαγρίδας, actually geese and guinea-fowl.[392] Although the text at the crucial point is lacunate, some victims at any rate were wrapped in decorated strips of linen or *byssos* (λίνου τελαμῶσιν ἢ βύσσου); some were holocausted.[393] These practices seem to reveal a fairly complex fusion of Egyptian and Greek elements: the manner of purifying the ἄδυτον seems to imply a debt to the cult of Demeter, whereas the detail about the restrictions on the types of animals to be killed and the allusion to linen bandages suggests some attempt to adopt Egyptian custom.[394] We should assume that in other places too there were analogous departures from what we might suppose to be the 'norm' for the Egyptian cults. Another type of integration between Egyptian and Greek institutions is represented by the temples granted the privilege of ἀσυλία, such as that of Serapis and Isis at Mopsuestia in eastern Cilicia, that was (τὸ) σεμπνότα]τον καὶ ἔνδοξον ἐν πάσηι τ[ῆι πόλει] καὶ χώραι δοξαζόμενον,[395] or the

[390] This sanctuary was evidently quite different from the temple of Serapis, Isis and Anubis in Tithorea itself, where slaves might be freed by fictitious sale: *RICIS* 106/0402–08, 0412f. (all dated to early II^{p}). The temple of Isis has never been located.

[391] Those who had eaten the flesh of sheep and goat were not allowed to sacrifice in the shrine of the Egyptian gods at Megalopolis for two days: *SEG* 28 (1978) 421 = *RICIS* 102/1701.

[392] Only one type of anseriform breeds in Egypt, namely the *alopochen aegyptiaca*, the Egyptian goose (e.g. Herodotus 2.72; Aelian, *NA* 5.30), which was never domesticated; we may assume these geese in Tithorea were not Egyptian but ordinary farmyard geese.

[393] Pausanias 10.32.14–16 with the comm. of N.D. Papachatis ad loc.; Dunand 1973, 173–8; L. Bricault, Pénétration et implantation des cultes isiaques en Grèce centrale, *AncWorld* 32 (2001) 147–52. The date of the foundation is unknown: Dunand 1973, 3: 41.

[394] It seems clear however that Pausanias has rather seriously misunderstood something here. On the Egyptian rules relating to the sacrifice of cattle, cf. Herodotus 2.41.3–6; he also records divergent rules relating to sheep and goats.

[395] *SEG* 44 (1994) no. 1227 l. 12f. = Rigsby 1996, 465–71 no. 217; see also the commentary of M.H. Sayar, P. Siewert and H. Taeuber, Asylie-Erklärungen des Sulla

temple of Isis Sachypsis at Theadelphia, south-west of lake Moeris in the Fayyûm.[396]

b. *Cultic Practice*

> I was anxiously excited about this fortunate outcome as I awaited the morning opening of the temple. Then the gleaming white curtains were drawn apart and we prayed to the venerable vision of the goddess (*deae venerabilem conspectum*), while a priest made the rounds of the altars arranged around the temple, performing the ritual with the appointed prayers and sprinkling water from a libation-vessel filled from within the sanctuary. The rites had been duly consummated and the worshippers were loudly announcing the first hour of the day…
>
> Apuleius, *Met.* 11, 20 tr. Hanson

We are familiar with the idea of Lucius as a guide to the Egyptian cults. In relation to the daily cult of these divinities, we are lucky enough to dispose of a number of other sources that, taken together, allow us to reconstruct both them and the organisation and composition of the associations of worshippers. The sanctuaries of these gods were often quite sizeable enclosures, as at Delos (Serapeum C), the Serapeum at Ostia or the temple of Isis at Pompeii, with spaces for worshippers to gather and walk about.[397] When the temple closed, life continued peacefully within the enclosure, since it afforded at least temporary accommodation in the παστοφόριον for ζάκοροι, νεωκόροι, or *aeditui*.[398] At least in larger temples, there were often other residents, whether temporary or long-term, who found shelter or asylum there:

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und des Lukullus für das Isis- und Sarapis-Heiligtum von Mopsuhestia (Ostkilikien), *Tyche* 9 (1994) 113–30.

[396] Bernand, *IFayoum* 2, nos. 112f. = Rigsby 1996, 554–56 no. 221 (93 BC). There was another inviolable temple of Isis Eseremphis, jointly with Heracles Callinicus, at Theadelphia: Bernand, *IFayoum* 2, 114 = Rigsby 1996, 556–9 no. 222 (70 BC).

[397] Delos: Roussel 1915–16, 250ff.; Dunand 1973, 2: 87; 93–5; Ostia: G. Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia*, 2 (Rome 1954) 77–85; Floriani Squarciapino 1962, 21f. with fig. 2; Malaise 1972b, 78f. no. 66; cf. Mar 1992; Pompeii: Tran tam Tinh 1964, 30–39; Malaise 1972b, 275–78; Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2000, 185–95 with Abb.6 (unnumbered pages at end). The largest such temple in the west was certainly the Iseum Campense, of course, although its precise dimensions, or even shape (except for the exedra, which is on the Severan *Forma urbis*), cannot be safely reconstructed: Lembke 1994, 25 (Rekonstruktionsversuch); 255 (Fundplan). However, the largely open area enclosed by the perimeter wall was c. 140m long and c. 60m wide at the southern (exedra) end.

[398] Cf. *ID* 2124 = *RICIS* 202/0296 (Serapeum C, Delos, c. 112/1 BC); *RICIS* 202/0424, Face A col. i l. 19: ἐν παστοφορίῳ…(inventory, 156/7 BC). Malaise 1972a, 141 rightly doubts whether priests actually lived in most Greek and Roman Isiac temples, as they traditionally did in Egypt itself (albeit on a sort of shift basis).

the κάτοχοι,[399] ἐγκατήσαντες,[400] ἱερόδουλοι,[401] children dedicated to the gods, for example at Hyampolis and Tithorea in Phthiotis,[402] those awaiting initiation, those vowed to periods of chastity.[403]

Apuleius' detailed descriptions allow us an insight into virtually all the activities that went on day by day in a temple.[404] It is therefore a fairly straightforward matter to describe them.[405]

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[399] κάτοχοι of the Egyptian gods are known almost exclusively from Egypt, however, esp. the famous case of the archive of Ptolemaeus in the Serapeum at Memphis (172–52 BC): U. Wilcken, Zu den κάτοχοι des Sarapeums, *APF* 6 (1913) 184–212; L. Delekat, *Kotoche. Hierodulie und Adoptionsfreilassung.* Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung 47 (Munich 1964); D.J. Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies* (Princeton 1988) 212–65. Just one case relating to the cult of Sarapis is known epigraphically from elsewhere, at Priene c. 200 BC: *IPriene* no. 195 l. 29 = *RICIS* 304/0802: [τ]οῖς κατεχομένοις ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, cf. Debord 1982, 92–4 (arguing that the institution here may more nearly resemble cases in temple estates in Asia Minor and Phoenicia than the model of Memphis. But this is pure speculation. At any rate, the Egyptian usage seems never to have been adopted in the west).

[400] Known only from *IGR* IV 1403 = *ISmyrna* no. 725 = *RICIS* 304/0204 (Smyrna, AD 211), a dedication by the philosopher Papinius, ἐγκατοχήσας τῷ κυρίῳ Σαράπιδι. It may simply be a variant of κατόχος, though the high status of the man involved (he was able to obtain permission for extending the Nemeseion directly from Caracalla) perhaps makes this unlikely.

[401] *IG* XIV 1024 = *IGUR* 101 = *RICIS* 501/0107 (Rome, early III^{p}): ἱερόδουλος (τῆς) πάσης ἱεροδουλί<α>ς; cf. IG XIV 914 = Malaise 1972b, 90f. Portus Ostiae 6 = *RICIS* 503/1211 l. 20f.

[402] Hyampolis: *IG* IX.1 no. 92 = *RICIS* 106/0302 (II–I^{a}); Tithorea: *IG* IX.1 no. 187 = *RICIS* 106/0401 (early II^{p}).

[403] Cf. Tibullus 1.3.22–32; Propertius 2.33a.1f.; 4.5.34; Ovid, *amor*. 2.13.17f.; Juvenal, *Sat*. 6.535–41; Apuleius, *Met*. 11.19, *castimoniorum abstinentiam satis arduam*; also Dunand 1973, 3: 192; Merkelbach 1995, 137f.; J. Alvar, Marginalidad e integración en los cultos místericos, in idem and F. Gascó (eds.), *Heterodoxos, reformadores y marginados en la Antigüedad Clásica* (Seville 1991) 71–90.

[404] The relation between the daily cult and the well-known frescoes from Herculaneum (see Pls. 23 and 24 here) is quite uncertain. Moreover, their provenance is completely unknown. I therefore allude to them for particular details only. The bibliography is: Tran tam Tinh 1971, 83f. no. 58 fig. 40 and pp. 29–38 = Malaise 1972b, 251f. no. 3 with pl. 35 = Merkelbach 1995, 553 Abb. 553 and colour-plate IV (Isiac ceremony with choirs); 85f. no. 59 fig. 41 with pp. 39–41 = Malaise 1972b, 252f. no. 4 = Merkelbach 1995, 554 Abb.73 and colour-plate V (between pp. 324–5) (Isiac dance).

[405] It is unclear what relation there was between the daily ritual in the Graeco-Roman world (assuming it was fairly standardised) and that of temples in Egypt, where the 'Opening of the Mouth' and/or the abridged 'Opening of the Mouth for breathing' were of central importance (Smith 1993, 13–18). Malaise 1986a, 89ff. argues that the Egyptian liturgy was used, but in my view the rituals seem similar to, though perhaps somewhat more elaborate than, those that were performed in other Graeco-Roman temples (cf. Scheer 2000, 65). Temples in Egypt held three different services, morning, noon and evening (of which the first was by far the most important), whereas Isiac temples in the Mediterranean world noted only the moments of opening and closing: J. Vandier, *La religion égyptienne*. Mana 1 (París 1949) 164–7; Sauneron 1957,

The text at the beginning of this section mentions the first event of each day, the opening of the temple. A sizeable group of worshippers was already gathered in front of the doors, just as there was when the doors closed again in the evening. The service began when the god 'awoke', a solemn fiction supervised by the ὡρολόγος, whose duty it was to announce the appointed time for the performance of every ritual act.[406] The next step was for the statue to be washed and dressed. This demanded an entire staff, in particular the (male) στολισταί, and the female *ornatrices*.[407] They bathed the statue and combed its hair,[408] perfumed it, burned incense and poured libations before it. The στολισταί then arrayed the statue in costly robes and hung it with jewels given by the better-off worshippers, to register their devotion and their circumstances. We have a number of striking examples of such generosity, including objects in gold (crowns, tiaras, diadems, fasteners, rings, ear-rings) as well as precious stones, not only from the well-known Delian inventory lists but also through votive-inscriptions from Pergamum, Thessalonica,

75–86; Dunand 1973, 1: 189–207; Meeks and Favret-Meeks 1996, 126–9. Note also the description of the daily ritual at Edfu by Alliot 1949, 1–197.

[406] A ὡρολόγιον (sundial, clepsydra, or some other device for measuring time) is mentioned as a dedication in *ID* 2087 = *RICIS* 202/0342 l. 11 (Serapeum C, Delos) and *AE* 1972: 168 = *RICIS* 509/0201 (Helvia Ricina, Picenum); this latter is inscribed on a spherical sundial. At least two Egyptian *klepsydrai* dating from the time of Alexander the Great are known, one in the British Museum, the other in the Hermitage, inv.2507a: *Ausstellung Liebighaus*, 548f. nos. 112f.; cf. Lembke 1994, 248, cat. no.**E55. Two early-Ptolemaic examples belonged to the furniture of the Iseum Campense: Lembke 1994, 246f. cat. nos. E52f. (one now in Turin, the other in the Museo Barracco). Another such water-clock, which were needed to tell the time at night, has been discovered at Ephesus: G. Langmann, G. Hölbl and M. Firneis, Die ägyptische Wasserlaufuhr aus Ephesos, *JdÖI* 55 (1984) Beibl. 4–68. Clement, *Stromat.* 6.4.36 mentions that the ὡρολόγος processed holding a ὡρολόγιον. On the importance of time in the Egyptian cults, cf. Malaise 1978, 685f. According to Porphyry, *de abst.* 4.9, the ὑμνῳδής woke the statue by speaking to it in Egyptian after he had purified the *cella* with water and lighted the sacred fire (explicitly with reference to the cult of Serapis, either at Alexandria or Memphis, cf. Patillon-Segonds 3: 61f.; Dunand 1973, 3: 198; Merkelbach 1995, 150f. §276).

[407] στολισταί: e.g. Plutarch, *de Iside* 3, 352b4; 39, 366f2; *IG* II/III² 3644 = *RICIS* 101/0215 (Athens), *IG* XIV 2338 = Pais, *CIL* V Suppl. 226 = *RICIS* 515/0125 (Aquileia); *ornatrix f* (*ani*?): *CIL* XII 3061 = *RICIS* 605/0103 (Nemausus).

[408] IG V.2, 472 = *RICIS* 102/1702 (Megalopolis, II–III^{p}), with F. Dunand, Sur une inscription isiaque de Mégalépolis, *ZPE* 1 (1967) 219–24; eadem 1973, 2: 164f.; cf. Apuleius, *Met.* 11.9: *et quae pectines eburnos ferentes gestu bracchiorum flexuque digitorum ornatum atque oppexum crinium regalium fingerent* (women in the Isiac procession, evidently referring to the daily ritual in the temple).

Tarracina, Nemi, Italica in Baetica, and Acci (Guadix) in Tarraconensis.[409] Once the statue had been washed and adorned, it was offered food that had been brought by the worshippers who had risen early to hand in their offerings as soon as the temple-doors opened, and then cooked in the temple. These dishes were later actually consumed by the priests and servants, as in Greek and Roman temples.[410]

The temple-area remained open and accessible to worshippers all day long. Given the ritual demands made on individuals, there must have been a good deal of coming and going. The doors were closed again in the afternoon, and a ceremonial performed similar to that of the morning, albeit less elaborate (Sauneron 1957, 87). Martial recounts how the priests formed up in a group to announce to the goddess that the eighth hour had arrived, which meant that the temple was closing and that the worshippers present had to take their leave.[411] There must also have been a certain amount of commercial activity in the outbuildings, since they often housed stalls for flower- and fruit-vendors, workshops for sculptors, coroplasts, lamp- and amulet-makers, and all the workers who were needed to keep the temple-enclosure and its

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[409] Delos: *RICIS* 202/0423, 0427, 0433; rings in other lists: 202/0431; 0428 l. 29; Pergamum: *IPergamon* 336 = *RICIS* 301/1202 (three white linen robes, 80 gold leaves, cf. Dunand 1973, 3: 93–6); Thessalonica: *IG* X.2, 114 = *RICIS* 113/0556 (jewelled ear-rings, II^{p}); Tarracina: *CIL* X 6303bis = *RICIS* 502/0701: *cum collari argenteo*; Nemi: *CIL* XIV 2215 = *ILS* 4423 = *RICIS* 503/0301:. . *basileum ornatum ex gemmis n(umero) I*. . . *collarem ex gemmis beryllis, spatalia cum gemmis II, collarem alterum cum gemmis n(umero) VII, inaures ex gemmis n(umero) X*. . . *vestem liniam: tunicam I, pallium I, zona I cum segmentis argenteis, stola I*. . . (I^{p} or earlier); Italica: *AE* 1982: 521 = *RICIS* 602/0201: *cum inauribus tri[bacis mar]garitiis n. X et gemmis n. XXXX et berull(is) n. VIII et corona aurea cum gem(m)is n. XXV et gem(m)areis (VII?)* . . .; Acci: *CIL* II 3386 = *ILS* 4422 = *RICIS* 603/0101 (gift by Fabia Fabiana, second half II^{p}, too long to cite here). On the Spanish texts, see J. Alvar, La sociedad y el culto: Isis en la Bética, in C. González Román (ed.), *La Sociedad de la Bética. Contribuciones para su estudio* (Granada 1994) 9–28, with the warning that *CIL* II 3387 is probably a modern imitation of the Fabia Fabiana text.

[410] According to the sacred law from Priene (*IPriene* no. 95 l. 29 = *RICIS* 304/0802 l. 26–29; see n. 399 above), the food-offerings deposited at the temple by the δῆμος are to be fed to the κατεχόμενοι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεου. For the use of the food deposited as τραπεζώματα or *mensae* in Greek and Roman usage, see B. Gladigow, Zur Ikonographie und pragmatik römischer Kultbilder, in H. Keller and N. Staubach (eds.), *Iconologia sacra: Mythos, Bildkunst und Dichtung in der Religions- und Sozialgeschichte Alteuropas* (Berlin 1994) 9–24; Rüpke 2007a, 141.

[411] 10.48.1. It is difficult to give an equivalent time in our reckoning, since the length of hours varied with the season and the latitude (Bickerman 1980, 15); the ninth hour, at any rate, was dinner-time (Martial 4.8.6), and richer people generally stopped 'work' at the seventh hour. This implies that the temples actually closed not at dusk but in the early-mid afternoon.

various buildings in good repair and to supply worshippers with what they required went they went into the sacred area.[412]

There were however restrictions upon entry. With regard to Egypt itself, we know something of such rules from a ceremonial hieroglyphic text, actually inscribed in the time of Hadrian or Antoninus Pius on the columns of the hypostyle of the temple of Chnoum at Esna (Latopolis), 54 km south of Luxor, on the basis of older texts in the temple library.[413] The rules are included among the regulations for the festival of the advent of the creator-goddess Neit(h) on 19–20 Epeiph (mid-July, Nile-flood), but can perhaps be taken as generally valid, if not in detail, then in principle, for Egyptian cults generally.[414] There are three sections. The first applies only to persons wishing to take part in processions.

> All the men must have abstained from sexual contact with a woman for one day. They must be purified; they must be washed; they must be (appropriately) dressed.

The second section applies to those who are admitted to the temple courtyard:

> No one may be admitted to the temple who is possessed or bewitched: their place is on the perimeter of the sacred area.…
> Those who remain outside the temple are to remain seated to the right and left (of the main avenue), but are not to go to sleep. People are permitted to exclaim with joy anywhere in the outer temple.

The third and longest section applies to those permitted access to the temple-interior:

> The offering shall be placed on the festal altar of this holy divinity by the prophets, the purifier-priest and all the usual personnel of the temple.
> No one in mourning shall be admitted into the temple *cella*.
> All those who enter must have removed his body-hair, cut his nails, be tonsured. Anyone who wishes to enter the *cella* must be dressed in fine linen; anyone who wishes to enter the *cella* must be purified with natron.

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[412] Cf. Juvenal, *sat.* 12.27f.: *pictores quis nescit ab Iside pasci*?

[413] Sauneron 1962, 1–5. The texts include a calendar of festivals, and a series of ritual instructions. Both are probably, at least in basic form, a good deal older than the date at which they were inscribed: Sauneron speaks of the New Kingdom.

[414] It is frankly unknown how far such rules were observed outside Egypt. Briefly on Neit, see Bonnet 1952, s.v. Neith.

> Anyone who wishes to enter the *cella* must have avoided sexual contact with a woman for eight days; he must have abstained from impure foods for four days.
> Every man who wishes to enter this temple, or who needs to accomplish some ritual there, must depilate his head and body and cut his nails, and worship the god in the main aisle, in the area reserved for the townsfolk.
> As regards the normal temple-personnel, who are above these (i.e. allowed to approach nearer the altar?), they must keep themselves from contact with a woman for nine days, and pure from everything else for five.
> Those who fulfil these conditions are permitted to gain access to the temple via the side gate of the pylon, after they have washed in the lake and donned their clothes once more.
> All Asiatics, young and old, are prohibited from entering the temple!
> Women are prohibited from entering any part of the temple-area closer than 200 *setat* on any side;[415] it is a sin to approach nearer than 1500 cubits from north or south, or 1500 cubits from east or west.[416]

There are further restrictions on the consumption of wine, though they give the impression of being short-term, related to the forthcoming encounter with the god. Lucius too avoided wine during the preparations for his first initiation (Apuleius, *Met.* 11.23). Otherwise, however, wine was of course used in libations; the sacred law from Priene specifies that the excess wine from the ceremonies was to be a perquisite of the priest of Serapis.[417] Analogous rules to those at Esna, for example on sexual purity and abstinence from certain foods, can be guessed to have been imposed by Egyptian temples in the Mediterranean world, particularly upon priests. An unfortunately extremely fragmentary sacred law from Iasos on Rhodes begins: ἀφ' ὧν δεῖ ἁγν[ὸ]ν εἰσπορεύεσθαι…, "Those who enter must be free from the following impurities…".[418]

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[415] Two notices in Serapeion A at Delos from shortly after 166 BC likewise prohibit the entry of women (and of men dressed in anything made of wool): *ID* 2180f. = *RICIS* 202/0199–200.

[416] Sauneron 1962, 340–9 (with the explanatory notes); cf. L. Kákosy, Probleme der Religion im römerzeitlichen Ägypten, *ANRW* II.18.5 (1995) 2894–3049 at 3023f.

[417] *IPriene* no. 95 l. 29 = *RICIS* 304/0802 l. 26 (see nn. 399, 410 above). Of course this is not necessarily to say he was free to drink it up; such emoluments were normally to be sold on the market. As Malaise 1986a, 81 observes, restrictions on wine-drinking were part of the separation from the world thought to be necessary before close contact with the divine.

[418] *I.Iasos* 2, no. 242 = *RICIS* 305/1403 l. 1 (Principate); lines 2–14 are illegible, and the statements by Dunand 1973, 3: 192f. about their content, based on Accame's reading, cannot be sustained. The ruling about entering the temple in *SEG* 22 (1967) 114 = *LSCG* no. 50A = *RICIS* 101/0401 (Teithras, Attica, late I[a]) seems to refer to the

Stories were circulated about the consequences of disregarding such rules, and thus tended to reinforce them.[419]

Rules of this type tended to emphasise still further the alterity of the temple, already clear in its architectural and decorative differences from the Graeco-Roman norm, and in some cases, most especially the Iseum Campense, enhanced by Egyptianising decoration: lotus-leaf capitals, figural, unfluted granite columns, puzzling statuary, obelisks and hieroglyphs.[420] Equally strange was the appearance of the clergy, dressed as they were in white linen robes, their heads and cheeks shaved: *grege linigero… et calvo* (Pl. 24).[421] The rattling of the *sistrum*, taken to be a specifically Isiac instrument, was notorious. One of the Herculaneum frescoes shows a masked Ethiopian performing an apparently wild dance on the temple steps before admiring spectators, all dressed in exotic robes (Pl. 23). It was easy enough for sectors of Roman public opinion to equate this alterity with corruptibility in order to discredit

party involved in the dispute that the text is attempting to resolve, and can probably not be generalised. It is somewhat troubling that sacred laws similar to that from Iasos have not been found; one may however reflect that what gets noted in such texts is the new, and it may well be that such rules for worshippers were so widespread, and so enforced by the ζάκοροι, that they did not need to be inscribed.

[419] E.g. Pausanias 10.32.17, cited n. 45 above.

[420] Best appreciated in the plates to Lembke 1994, illustrating the unfortunately very limited remains of the decoration of the Iseum Campense (which was however extreme, indeed, with the partial exception of Beneventum, unique, among Isis- and Serapis- temples in the Greek and Roman world in its search for 'authenticity'). She aptly notes that none of the items actually imported from Egypt were chosen because they had anything to do with Isis or Serapis (they do not), they were simply decoration ("einen musealen Charakter verliehen haben muß"), and taken mainly from the Delta area, handy for transport (pp. 33–50). The same is true of Beneventum. However the temples at Herculaneum, Pompeii and Ostia all made some effort to emphasise their alterity; for example, one of the pylons at the entrance to the Serapeum at Ostia was decorated with an Apis-bull in pumice: Floriani Squarciapino 1962, 21 with pl. VII; cf. more generally Wild 1984; Bommas 2005; Quack 2005. The same point emerges clearly from the Herculaneum frescoes: in the 'Procession' fresco (Pl. 24 here), sphinxes are placed on either side of the temple-entrance, palm-trees grow, ibises wander about; in the 'Dancer' fresco, as well as the palms and the temple-decoration, there is an 'oriental'-looking altar in front of the steps (Pl. 23). The vogue for Egyptianising decoration in private houses no doubt familiarised these images to some extent, however; cf. J. Leclant, Aegyptiaca et milieux isiaques. Recherches sur la diffusion du matériel et des idées égyptiennes, *ANRW* II. 17.3 (1984) 1692–1709; Merkelbach 1995, 134–7, with the corresponding plates; C. Maderna, Ägypten—phantastische 'römische' Welt, in *Ausstellung Liebighaus*, 434–45.

[421] Juvenal, *Sat.* 6. 533; cf. Martial 12.28.19–21, Minucius Felix, *Octav.* 22.1; Arnobius, *adv. nat.* 7.33 etc. On the perceived alterity of Egyptian priests and cult, cf. Malaise 1972a, 385–406.

the Egyptian cults, most famously, as we saw in Chapter 3.3, in relation to the exploitation of the supposed credulity of women.[422] If anything, however, it was not the priests or the *sistrum* but the theriomorphism of some Egyptian divinities, above all *Pharia iuvenca* and *latrator Anubis*, that caused the most enduringly hostile comment.[423]

It was however not so much the daily ceremonies of opening and closing the temple as the manifold activities undertaken in it or near it that helped to bind worshippers of the Egyptian gods to one another as a group and, as individuals, to construct appropriate sentiments and dispositions as regards these gods. One such event is the sacred dancing I have just mentioned. Another is likely to be smaller processions staged on occasions other than the *Isidis navigium*. A probable example is the second of the Herculaneum frescoes (Pl. 24), which depicts the beginning of a procession no doubt analogous to the grander Alexandrian one described by Clement (*Strom*. 6.4.35), albeit on a far smaller scale, with the προφήτης, the head of the temple-organisation, emerging from the temple carefully carrying a *hydria*, the ultimate reference-point of the Egyptian cults abroad, and greeted by two antithetical choirs, before beginning the sacred tour (cf. Malaise 1972b, 251f.). The deliberate alterity of such events exercised an undeniable fascination on many of the spectators, a fascination conveyed both by the 'documentary' detail the painter has chosen to include and by the focusing of the spatial organisation upon the figure of the προφήτης himself, and the choice of gold-paint to pick out the *hydria*.

I would like at this point to examine the role of two basic ritual practices, sacrifice and prayer, as elements in the process of binding worshippers to the Egyptian cults.

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[422] Josephus, *AJ* 18.3.4, §65–80; cf. Juvenal, *sat*. 6.488f.; 525–41 etc. Of the story of Decius Mundus and Paulina (the affair of AD 19), Malaise comments, "Sans doute, dans ce récit…le seul détail véridique est-il le début d'une participation ouverte de matrones au culte isiaque": 1972a, 88; cf. Heyob 1975, 118f.; Mora 1990, 2: 91–5 seems by contrast to accept the story as veridical.

[423] Cicero, *de nat. deor*. 3.47; Vergil, *Aen*. 8.698; Propertius 3.11.40–6; 3.28a.17f.; Ovid, *ars amat.* 3.635; Lucan, *bell.civ*. 8.831, Plutarch, *de Iside* 71, 379de etc.; cf. the enormous compilation of passages by Smelik and Hemelrijk 1984. Leclant 1981, 873 rather oddly plays this aspect right down; Richter 2001, 208f. rightly refers to the general argument of Plutarch, *de superst*. as consistent with this rejection. Apuleius, *Met.* 11.11 claims that the aim of strangeness in the Egyptian cults was *etiam ipsa novitate reverendam*.

i. *Sacrifice and Votives*[424]

The most prominent victim in the literary sources is the goose,[425] which also seems to have been in some sense a sacred bird—at any rate there was a flock of them in the grounds of the temple of Isis and Serapis at Smyrna.[426] Here too however there is clear evidence of adaptation to and integration with Greek and Roman sacrificial customs. Thus the *lex sacra* from Priene prescribes the offering of two chickens by the priest at the *Isia* on 20 Apatourion, as well as a number of other things: a 'quarter' (τεταρτεῖς) of barley, two of wheat, seven bronze spits; the sanctuary is also to be purified with the blood of a chicken.[427] The altar of the temple-caretaker (*aeditimus*) Astragalus now in the Louvre shows him about to sacrifice a dove or possibly a partridge to Isis over a lighted altar with fruits piled on it.[428] A fragmentary Hadrianic sacrificial calendar from Athens now in the Ashmolean Museum, probably that of a private religious association, lists a sacrifice on 13 Boedromion (mid-September) to the couple Nephthys and Osiris of a cockerel and a selection of fruits; at the same ceremony, barley and wheat grains

[424] For a list of ritual objects in the Egyptian cults, including fumigations, means of illumination and musical instruments, see Dunand 1973, 3: 218–21.

[425] Ovid, *Fasti* 1.453f. (*Inachiotis* = Isis); *AnthPal* 6.231 l. 4 = *Garland*, Philip no. XXII; Juvenal, *sat.* 6.540f.; Aelius Aristeides, *Or.* 49 (= *Sacred Tales* 3) 45 (the seller of geese is instructed by Isis to reserve his last two birds for Aristeides); a goose is depicted beside the Isiac priest in the illustration for *mensis November* in the calendar of Filocalus: Stern 1968, 50 fig. 5; cf. Dunand 1973, 3: 76; 205. Documentary evidence in Egypt: a goose among the gifts to be given to the King εἰς τὰ Εἰσιεῖα, i.e. at the Hathyr festival of 254 BC: Apollonios to Zenon: *PCair.Zen.* 4, 59560 l. 4f.; declaration of Horus about the delivery of a goose and goose eggs (?) εἰς τὰ Εἰσιῆα: *BGU* VII 1501 (Philadelphia in the Fayyûm); for Tithorea, see n. 392 above. The Egyptian goose, which was not much eaten (indeed in modern times has been considered uneatable), seems simply to have been one of the commonest sacrificial victims in Egypt: Bonnet 1952, 200, s.v. Gans; contra: L. Störk, s.v. Nilgans, *LÄg* 4 (1982) 484. Harpocrates is sometimes represented as riding on, or simply holding, a goose (also cockerels, ducks, dogs, sphinxes etc.), e.g. Dunand 1979, 232f. nos. 222–26; Bayer-Niemeier 1988, 104 no. 133 = *Ausstellung Liebighaus*, 654 no. 243; Bayer-Niemeier 1988, 69 no. 29 = *Ausstellung Liebighaus*, 659f. no. 253; Török 1995, 76f. nos. 84f. (identified as a duck, however, which I believe to be mistaken, esp. as the type was surely taken over from the goose of Aphrodite). But, as Bonnet points out, the reason for the association is obscure.

[426] Aelius Aristeides, *Or.* 49 (= *Sacred Tales* 3) 49 with Festugière 1986, ad loc.

[427] *IPriene* no. 195 l. 9f. = *RICIS* 304/0802 (c. 200 BC): θύσει δὲ ὁ ἱερεὺς τῶ[ι Σαρά[πιδι . . . τῶν νομιζομένων νοσ[σῶν δύο . . .; l. 36: [τὸ ἱερ]ὸν καθαιρέτω νοσ[σῶι. . . . See also Dunand 1973, 3: 56f.; 149f.; 204; 206.

[428] *CIL* VI 345 = Malaise 1972b, 113f. Rome no. 6 = Lembke 1994, 141 B**6 and 246 **E51 with pl. 47.3 = *RICIS* 501/0122. All are agreed that the bird is a dove; to me the beak looks more like that of a partridge—or even a guinea-fowl. At any rate, it is far too small for a goose.

are to be scattered, and a μελίκρατον, milk or water sweetened with honey, offered as a libation.[429] Such a mixture of animal and vegetable offerings is common in Greek sacred laws.[430]

As a class, lustrations and libations were of great symbolic importance in the cult of the Egyptian divinities. There is plenty of evidence that such Nile-water was considered to be more than merely a purificatory agent: it was an especially effective mediator, having the property of turning offerings into material assimilable by the gods.[431] Genuine or merely suppositious Nile water was thus freely used in ritual: not only are ὑδρεῖα, the vessels used to contain it, mentioned in several votives,[432] there is archaeological evidence for such objects,[433] and *situlae* are

[429] *IG* II/III² 1367 = *LSCG* no. 52 = *RICIS* 101/0225 ll. 4–6 (extract only). This is the sole western epigraphic evidence for the worship of Nephthys, the sister of Isis and Osiris, wife of Seth (E. Graefe, s.v. Nephthys, *LÄg* 4 [1982] 457–60), though it is generally thought that the deity Νεωτέρα conceals her (Malaise 1972a, 215f.). Since she is closely associated with Isis' burial of and mourning for Osiris, and was one of the four divine guardians of the canopic jars (see chap. 2.1.a.i above), Bricault is probably correct to see here a calque on Persephone and Hades, particularly given the agrarian-Dionysian associations of the remainder of the text (cf. Nilsson, *GGR* 2: 331), and of the μελίκρατον, cf. Graf 1980, though such a libation is also found in connection with holocaust-sacrifice (e.g. *Syll*³ 1035 l. 34 = *LSCG* 151A [*Voropfer* to Zeus Polias and Hestia on Cos]). Dunand 1973, 2: 137–9 rightly emphasises the Greek character of the offerings; elsewhere (3: 240f.) she rather implausibly argues that this sacrifice was in fact part of the Hathyr festival.

[430] Round cakes (*popana*), along with a goose, are mentioned as an offering to Isis by Philip of Thessalonike, *AnthPal* 6.231 l. 3 = *Garland*, Philip no. XXII; and to Osiris by Juvenal, *sat.* 6.541; cf. Roeder 1916, 2127.

[431] Cf. Alliot 1949, 46–9; Wild 1981; Malaise 1985; Kaplony 1989. On the very frequent terracottas of Harpocrates, but also Isis and 'Bubastis', with a round-bellied *nw*-pot, which is the standard Egyptian water-libation vessel, used as a figure for blessing and fertility, see Dunand 1979, 74f.; Török 1995, 62f. discussion under no. 62.

[432] *IG* X.2, 83 = *RICIS* 113/0521 (Thessalonike, 37/6 BC (?)); *ID* 2617 l. 4 = *RICIS* 202/0206 (Serapeum C, Delos); *ID* 2620 = *RICIS* 202/0210 l. 1 (ibid.); *ID* 1435 = RICIS 202/0425 (inventory, Delos, apparently after156/5 BC); *hydraeum cemmis* (i.e. *gemmis*) *exornatum et auratum: CIL* XIV 3941 = *ILS* 4378 = *RICIS* 503/0801 (Nomentum). Also the Isiac *lacus* at Lambaesis, which must have been intended as a source of such water: *CIL* VIII 2631 = 18101 = *ILS* 5778 = *RICIS* 704/0303 (mid-III^{p}). Malaise 1972a, 126 suggests that canopus jars fulfilled the same function in the west; e.g. the two diorite statues of priests carrying canopic-jars at Beneventum: Müller 1963a, 95–8 no. 284; 106 no. 288 (this "diorite" is not true diorite but a spotty, 'interesting' stone ["Chephren-diorite"] extracted in the Libyan desert and mainly found in worked form at Memphis: cf. D. Wildung, s.v. Diorit, *LÄg* 1 (1975) 1096).

[433] Cf. Griffiths 1975, 208–10; Wild 1981, 105–10.

commonly represented being carried by Isis and her priestesses.[434] Apuleius describes an especially venerated gold *urnula* with a spout and handle being carried in procession,[435] and there is some iconographic evidence for similar vessels, for example on the well-known Isiac procession in the Vatican formerly in the Maffei collection, where a sacred pitcher is being carried by a priest with veiled head and arms (see Pl. 22).[436] On the other hand, there is no very satisfactory evidence concerning the precise ritual significance or use of such water. Most scholars assume that its regenerative power was the focus of interest: the worshippers gratefully offered Nile-water to the gods not only to assure agrarian prosperity but also the perpetuation and regeneration of human life.[437] There are several references in Late Egyptian texts at Dendera to the 'humours' of Osiris that were preserved in vases.[438] Libations inside the sanctuary may have been intended to recall Osiris' rising with the Nile-water: according to Plutarch, as I have already remarked, the Nile, and

[434] E.g. the well-known Isis-statue in dark marble in the Museo Archeologico in Naples: Tran tam Tinh 1990, 767 no. 53a = *Ausstellung Liebighaus* 623 no. 205 with colour pl.; the equally well-known statue supposedly from the Villa of Hadrian at Tibur, now in the Capitoline: Helbig[4] 2:238 no. 1433 = Malaise 1972b, 110f. Villa Adriana no. 9; the headless statuette of Isis in the Palazzo Altemps, inv. 4235: *Collezioni egizie*, 66 no. 23 with colour pl. (otherwise unpublished); terracotta statuette of Isis with *situla* in Musée des Beaux Arts, Budapest: Török 1995, 86 no. 104; Isis holding a *nw*-pot: Dunand 1990,144 no. 382; and the list in Tran tam Tinh 1990, 776(e). Priestesses: Isias from Smyrna, grave relief now in the British Museum, inv. Sc 639 (II[P]): Walters 1988, 53f. = Eingartner 1991, 143, no. 98 pl. 62; Cantina Proc(u)la depicted on her funerary cippus (*CIL* VI 34726) in the Palazzo Massimo: *Collezioni egizie* no. 16 with colour pl.; the priestess from Tauromenium: Malaise 1972b, 323 Tauromenium no. 9 with pl. 64. This item of equipment is virtually standard in the Attic reliefs showing women as Isis, cf. Walters 1988, passim; 2000, 64 fig. 1; 68 fig. 4, 70 fig. 5. Loose examples of late-period Egyptian *situlae* are also known, e.g. *Collezioni egizie* 76 no. 36.

[435] *Met.* 11.11; for the parallel (but partially conflicting) passages, cf. Griffiths 1970, 437 on *de Iside* 36, 365b2f.

[436] Relief: Helbig[4] 1: 388f. no. 491 = Malaise 1972b, 234f. no. 441 = Merkelbach 1995, 615 Abb.145.

[437] See Chap. 2.1.a on Osiris and the Nile. Firmicus Maternus, *de errore* 2.5 speaks of the worshippers expecting some blessing from the water each year: *hanc aquam quam colis putas aliquando prodesse*. Already in the Ptolemaic period, one of the Isiac hymns from the temple of Philae (in Egyptian) mentions water brought from Biggeh "that bestows everlasting life": Zabkar 1983, 134 (Hymn 4); Biggeh was the location of the most famous tomb of Osiris, the Abaton: Dunand 1973, 1: 149f.

[438] L. Pantalacci, Une conception originelle de la survie osirienne d'après les textes de Basse Époque, *Göttinger Miszellen* 52 (1981) 57–66 at 58f.

indeed all water, is the Ὀσίριδος ἀπορροή, just as Isis is the lord of dew.[439] But the hydria seems itself to have become the metonymic object of adoration when carried in procession (e.g. Pl. 24).[440] It seems even to have become a sort of deity, *Hydreios*, to whom offerings might be made.[441]

Milk, as the liquid that enables the infant to survive after birth, may in some contexts have had a role analogous to water. At any rate, Apuleius describes a priest at Cenchreae pouring libations of milk from a small, round breast-shaped vessel (*in modum papillae rotundatum*); later a mess of milk and kibbled grain was floated out onto the waters of the harbour.[442] The *lex sacra* from Priene, as well as the occasional images of Isis (and Serapis) with *patera*, shows that wine too was used for liba-

[439] Plutarch, *de Iside* 33, 364a; 36, 365b; 38, 366a etc. with Griffiths' note on p. 424; Isis = dew, *PGrMag* XII. 234: ἐγώ εἰμι Ἶσις ἡ καλουμένη δρόσος. For what it is worth, 18 amphorae inscribed Σεράπις (gen.) δῶρα have been found at different locations in Pompeii: *CIL* IV 6546f.; Tran tam Tinh 1964, 85 and 177f. nos. 150–162; *SEG* 42 (1992) 922; *RICIS* 504/0219. The courtyard of the Serapeum at Ostia was decorated with Nilotic scenes, now virtually disappeared: Floriani Squarciapino 1962, 21. Underground cisterns have been found in Serapeum A and C at Delos (cf. Dunand 1973, 2: 101), at Gortyn and in the second temple of Isis at Pompeii: Wild 1981, 34–8; 40–47; the tympanum of the tempietto protecting the cistern at Pompeii is decorated in stucco, and shows a hydria, with a kneeling worshipper to left and right (Tran tam Tinh 1964, 34 = Malaise 1972b, 276f.; 1985, 145; Wild 1981, 76–84). Such constructions were simply means of accommodating Egyptian ideas to the different physical circumstances of the Mediterranean world.

[440] Vitruvius, *de arch*. 8 praef. 4 remarks on the adoration of the *hydria* in the Egyptian cults; Clement, *Stromat*. 6.4.37 describes the προφήτης in a procession holding a *hydria* carefully against his chest, cf. Malaise 1972a, 116; a fine example of a gilt-copper *hydria* for use in Egyptian cult was found in 1831 at Egyed nr. Scarbantia (Sopron) in Pannonia Sup.: V. Wessetzky, *Die ägyptischen Kulte zur Römerzeit in Ungarn.* EPROER 1 (Leyden 1961) 42f. with pls. VI–VIII, figs. 10–12 [this book must be one of the worst-organised academic titles published since the seventeenth century, having no list of contents, no indices, no sub-headings and no catalogue-numbers]. On the *hydria* more generally, see Wild 1981, 3; 69; 157f.; Malaise 1985, 144.

[441] Dedication of ritual objects by a *melanephoros* from Alexandria in Serapeum C at Delos to Serapis, Isis, Anubis, Harpocrates and Ὑδρείωι, 95/4 BC (?): ID 2087 = *RICIS* 202/0342; cf. Malaise 2005, 59–66.

[442] Apuleius, *Met*. 11.10; 16, cf. Malaise 1986, 95. The image is of course taken from the common representation of Isis offering her breast to the infant Horus, e.g. *Ausstellung Liebighaus* 646f. no. 233 (Allard Pierson museum, inv. 7766, from Alexandria, Roman period).

tions, as we would expect.[443] In Egypt, the *nw*-pot was used both for water- and wine-libations alike.[444]

Another type of ritual container was the *cista*. In the myth, Osiris' head was preserved in a wicker-work casket; Isis, inasmuch as she was keeper of the bits of his dismembered body, was herself identified with it.[445] However the *cista*, in the familiar form of a circular wicker-work basket, is unknown in the Egyptian cults until the Roman period.[446] Although they certainly did borrow other items from the Eleusinian-Dionysiac sphere, Malaise has argued that in this case there was none (1985, 135). There are only three literary allusions to *cistae*, and in each case the reference is to something different, so that genuine doubts have been expressed as to whether they had any specific role in the cult.[447] Nevertheless there is clear archaeological evidence for them, not merely on Isiac altars but also on frescoes at Pompeii, for example below the *inventio Osiridis* scene in the later Iseum at Pompeii.[448] The

[443] *IPriene* no. 195 ll. 26, 32f. = *RICIS* 304/0802; Isis + *patera*: e.g. bronze statuette of Isis Fortuna in the Palazzo Massimo, inv. 256095: *Collezioni egizie* 87, no. 53; *CIL* VI 19875 = Malaise 1972b, 128 Rome 54 = *RICIS* 501/0191 with pl. XC shows Isis with one hand raised in blessing, and holding a *patera* in the other; there is a common series of factory lamps showing the triad Isis + *patera*, Harpocrates and Anubis, e.g. Mus. Naz. Naples inv. no. 19.301 = Tran tam Tinh 1964, 171 no. 133b pl. 22.2; cf. the statue of Isis in the temple at Luxor, which probably once held a patera: Walters 1988, 112 pl. 52d (c. AD 126); Sarapis + *patera*: e.g. Nile-fresco from the Casa delle Amazoni, Pompeii, showing Isis beside Serapis holding a corpucopiae and a *patera*: Tran tam Tinh 1964, 127f. no. 13 = Merkelbach 1995, 547 Abb. 66; bronze plaque from a villa outside Pompeii, now in the Antiquario, inv. 1090/4, showing Serapis and Isis on either side of an altar/base with (a statue of?) Harpocrates standing on it: Tran tam Tinh 1964, 201 no. 105bis; marble relief from Delos, now in Athens, with Isis + *situla* and Sarapis + *patera* on either side of the Agathodaemon: Dunand 1981 no. 3. The well-known addition to the Rabirii funerary relief from the Via Appia (*CIL* VI 2246 = *ILS* 4404 = RICIS 501/0160), showing Usia Prima, represents a sistrum on one side of her head (spectator's left), and a patera on the other: *Collezioni egizie*, 118 no. 87 = Malaise 1972b, 124: Rome no. 35. There are many other examples.

[444] Poo 1986, 1187f.; Török 1995, 62f.

[445] As the 'reed cista', cf. Griffiths 1975, 222–26. For Osiris, see Chap. 2.1.a above.

[446] M. Heerma van Vos, The cista mystica in the Cult and Mysteries of Isis, in Vermaseren 1979, 23–26.

[447] Tibullus 1.7.47f.; Apuleius, *Met*. 11.11 with Griffiths 1975, 224; Plutarch, *de Iside* 39, 366f2.

[448] Altars: e.g. *CIL* VI 344 = 30744 = Helbig^4 2 no. 1189 = Malaise 1972b, 113 Rome no. 5 = Lembke 1994, 245, Kat. E49, pl. 46.1 = *RICIS* 501/0121; *CIL* VI 13454 = Malaise 1972b, 127 Rome no. 45 = *RICIS* 501/0194, a *cista* on both lateral faces of the funerary relief of Balbullia Varilla; *AE* 1964: 111 = *RICIS* 502/0601 (Cereatae Maritimae), *cista* on front, etc.; Pompeii, north-west wall of *sacrarium*, between two large *agathodaemon*-snakes: Tran tam Tinh 1964, 143f. no. 47 = Dunand 1981 no. 7 =

very well-equipped Iseum (or Isea) at Beneventum, where the majority of the surviving furnishings are in diorite, boasted a *cista* in porphyry, a notably hard and expensive ornamental stone from the quarries of the Eastern Desert.[449] In all these cases the *cista* is encircled by a snake, and often decorated with a crescent moon.

Lastly, it is worth emphasising the extent to which offerings and sacrifice constructed a coherent world within the Egyptian cults. Such actions contributed to a sense of tranquillity on the part of the worshipper, the product of a confidence that cultic acts contributed to the maintenance of the order of things. The fulfilment of cultic obligations of course had such an effect in all contexts, most obviously in the implicit guarantee for the general well-being of the community provided by the regular offering of civic sacrifice. But if we are to believe Apuleius, this sense was particularly marked in the case of the Egyptian cults. There is, for example, a clear contrast between the roles of animals, and sacrifice, in Books 1–10 of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* and that of Book 11: in the latter, both animals and humans achieve their proper place in a world ordered by divinity.[450] With regard to sacrifice, the book conveys an impression of sacramental calm, stability and order, by contrast with the disorientation, alienation and misunderstandings that pepper the preceding books.[451]

ii. *Prayer, Healing and Incubation*

> Good Isis, hear me this prayer, though thou deny me
> a matter of more weight; good Isis, I beseech thee!
> Charmian in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act 1, scene 2

Prayer is the established means whereby individuals can approach divinity and submit requests for help. Apuleius suggests that, in the case of Isis, this was not the usual votive transaction, whereby the petitioner undertakes to repay the deity if the prayer or request be answered.

Merkelbach 1995, 507 Abb. 26 (false interpretation); other examples: Tran tam Tinh 1964 nos. 18 and 67.

[449] Müller 1969a, 106f. no. 289 = Malaise 1972b, 304 no. 52 = Merkelbach 1995, 674 Abb. 214.

[450] C.C. Schlam, Man and Animal in the Metamorphoses of Apuleius, in Hijmans and Schmidt 1981, 115–142; idem, *The Metamorphoses of Apuleius. On Making an Ass of Oneself* (London 1992) 100.

[451] T.D. McCreight, Sacrifical Ritual in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, in H. Hofmann (ed.), *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel* 5 (Groningen 1993) 31–61 at 56f.

Rather, the deity is approached by stressing the asymmetry between her omnipotence and the utter humility of the petitioner, expressed in the metaphor of servitude. Laid low by destiny, the petitioner throws himself on the goddess' mercy (*in fidem*). At least in the idealised version of the *Metamorphoses*, this gesture of abjectness prompts the outpouring of her benevolence and the appropriate transformation of *nefaria Fortuna* into a *Fortuna videns*, a Fortune who can see clearly what she is about (*Met.* 11.15). If the Isiast disregards the goddess' commands or refuses her offers, he is punished; the punishment ceases only when he repents and openly admits his fault, sometimes, as we saw earlier, in public.[452]

This pattern of insistence on the asymmetry between god and worshipper has been familiar since the remarks of A.D. Nock and F. Bömer on the phrase κατ' ἐπιταγήν or κατὰ πρόσταγμα, and the notion of δοῦλος θεοῦ, observations that were very largely confirmed by H.W. Pleket.[453] Whereas Nock, and less explicitly Bömer, argued that it was implicitly based upon the non-Classical model of the absolute Hellenistic ruler, Pleket urged that we should see the usage as an expression of affectivity as well as a mere insistence upon distance. However, he agreed that the pattern becomes far more marked in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, particularly in the case of Isis, certain Lydian cults, the Jewish god, and early Christianity: "The *incidental* designation of the worshipper as 'servant' of the helping, friendly deity in the context of a profound personal religiosity and in emergency situations develops into a *structural* phenomenon in the cult of the almighty Oriental deities in a markedly hierarchical period" (1981, 165, cf. 171). Social dependence is represented as pure religious feeling, thus veiling the legitimation of the social order effected by the naturalisation of hierarchy in this type of religious discourse. Of course such language was, or came to be, widely current in the Roman empire, indeed catachrestic: one of the commanders at Vindolanda,....] Karus, who addresses one of his correspondents as *frater*—evidently therefore a status-equal—also addresses him in the same letter as *dominus*.[454] We should therefore at the same time

[452] See Dunand 1973, 3: 216f. and Chap. 3.3 above.

[453] Nock 1925, 95–7 (= 1972, 1: 45–8); Bömer 1957–63, 3: 207f.; Henrichs 1976; Pleket 1981. Although Pleket (1981, 155) claims that there are traces of these ideas in Classical evidence, so far as I can see he provides none except for the problematic case of Ion in Euripides' play (164f.).

[454] A.K. Bowman and J.D. Thomas, *Vindolanda: The Latin Writing-Tablets.* Britannia Monographs Series 4 (London 1983) 105–111 no. 22 l. 5f. *rogo ergo domine* (the last

recognise the possible limits of such legitimation.[455] "Toute domination symbolique suppose de la part de ceux qui la subissent une forme de complicité qui n'est ni soumission passive à une contrainte supérieure, ni adhésion libre à ses valeurs" (Bourdieu 2001, 78). Such language conveyed a degree of commitment to the deity that was deemed proper, and perhaps little more.

However that may be, the appropriate place for uttering a prayer was the temple, which was deemed the privileged spot for communicating with the deity, transmitting requests and obtaining a response by means of a vision, a dream or some significant sign of the kind discussed earlier. As often as not, it was there that the goddess revealed herself to the supplicant.[456] The form, usual in other cults too, was for the prayer to be uttered over a burning altar.[457] Women loosened their hair to pray.[458] One might also kneel, as documented by some of the *naophoros* statues from Beneventum, Ostia and the Iseum Campense, and commonly in Egypt; but worshippers are often described as seated, no doubt with their eyes fixed on the statue.[459] Apuleius described how Lucius prays to the goddess' statue early in the morning, when the doors have been opened and the white curtains drawn back to reveal the image.[460] People prayed for the ordinary favours, health and recovery of health,

four letters are dotted); cf. in l. 4: the reading *domi]ne* is reasonably secure; 126–32 no. 37 ll. 4–6 with p. 92 (on no. 4 l. 36. The editors cite *PHib*. 276.3ff. (= *CPL* 260): *et praese(n)s te domine frater*…; and *POxy* 32.4ff. (= *CPL* 249): *peto domine ut eum*…; by the third century, *dominus* evidently might just mean 'my dear chap': *PDur.* 63 = Fink 1981, 355 no. 88 recto l. 5: *peto domine frater*…; *PDur*. 64 = Fink 1981, 365 no. 89 *12* col. i l. 7: *opto te d]omine*…

[455] Note the implicit reserves of Nock, 1928, 83f. (= 1972, 1: 74f.).

[456] E.g. Apuleius, *Met.* 11.5: *En adsum tuis commota, Luci precibus*…; cf. Malaise 1980, 113.

[457] E.g. Vergil, *Aen*. 4.219; other forms of respect and admiration, not necessarily linked to prayer: Cicero, *2Verr.* 4.94 (embracing the statue too); Ovid, *Met*. 9.772 (embracing altar); Apuleius, *Met.* 4.28 (putting thumb and forefinger to the mouth). In general, see Appel 1909, 190f.; 199f.; C. Guittard, Ritualisme et sentiment religieux dans la prière à Rome et en Ombrie, in A. Caquot and P. Canivet (eds.), *Ritualisme et vie intérieure. Religion et culture* (Paris 1989) 19.

[458] Tibullus 1.3.31: *resoluta comas*, and 90: *longos turbata capillos*, with Smith *ad loc*.; Ovid, *Met.* 9.772: *passis*…*capillis*, with Bömer *ad loc*.

[459] Kneeling: Müller 1963a, 104 no. 287; 108 no. 287; 290; Lembke 1995, 231 no. E25, pls. 38.1–2 (XXVIth Dynasty—Egyptian import); sitting: Tibullus 1.3.30; Ovid, *Amores* 2.13.17: *saepe sedit*.

[460] *Met*. 11.20: *velis candentibus reductis in diversum, deae venerabilem conspectum apprecamur*…

protection in child-birth,[461] for the family, particularly children,[462] safe return from a journey, escape from poverty,[463] success in business or profession.[464] As Nock emphasised: "Isis and Sarapis were commonly thought of as deities effective in an ordinary way".[465]

Prayer of this type is occasionally linked to miracle. A famous fictional case is Ovid's narrative of the transformation of Iphis into a man.[466] Lygdus, the husband of Telethusa of Phaestus, had instructed her to expose a female child if one should be born to her, but Isis appeared to the expectant mother in a dream and bade her rear the baby, *quidquid erit* (l. 699). With the connivance of the wet-nurse, the girl was brought up as a boy named Iphis after the grandfather. In due course, Lygdus arranged a marriage with Ianthe; in her desperation for the deception not to become public, with all the concomitant scandal for the

[461] There are a number of votives from northern Greece to Isis Λοχία, e.g. *SEG* 34 (1984) 627 = *RICIS* 113/0218 (Dion); *IG* X.2, 97 = 113/0523 (Thessalonike). Despite the minimal votive evidence (none of the dedications to Bubastis mention the grounds for the dedication), there is good reason to think that Isis-Bubastis had special care for confinements: Ovid, *Met.* 9.691; Nicarchus ap. *AnthPal* 11.18 (mid-I^{p}), with F. Dunand, Une interpretatio romana d'Isis: Isis, déesse des naissances, *REL* 40 (1962) 83–6; 1973, 3: 263–5; eadem, s.v. Boubastis, *LIMC* 3 (1986) 144f.; Malaise 1972a, 189f.; Heyob 1975, 70–3; G. Wagner, Une nouvelle dédicace à Boubastis, *ASAE* 69 (1983) 247–52; J. Quaegebauer, Le culte de Boubastis-Bastet en Égypte gréco-romaine, in L. Delvaux (ed.), *Les divins chats d'Égypte: un air subtil, un parfum dangereux* (Leuven/Louvain 1991) 117–27. Isis enabling conception: Isidorus, *Hymn* 2 l. 15f. (p. 36 Vanderlip) = Totti no. 22. J. Bergman, *Isis-Seele und Osiris-Ei: Zwei ägyptologische Studien zu Diodorus Siculus 1.27.4–5* (Uppsala 1970) argues that the connection between Isis, Bastet and procreation was established through the Egyptian New Year festival.

[462] Cf. V. von Gonzenbach, *Untersuchungen zu den Knabenweihen im Isiskult der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Bonn 1957); Malaise 1972a, 150f.; 1986, 110; Dunand 1973, 3: 170; Tran tam Tinh 1973, 22f.; Heyob 1975, 77f.; J. Alvar et al., La religiosidad mistérica en el espacio familiar, *ARYS* 1 (1998) 218–29. For two further images of children devoted to Isis, see F. Baratte, Deux portraits d'enfants isiaques, *RA* 1993, 101–10 (Mauretania Caesariensis); also the well-known early IV^{p} funerary stele from Ostia, found in the Fascist excavations: Malaise 1972b, 86 no. 117 with pl. 9.

[463] This is the purported occasion for the sacrifice described in *AnthPal* 6.231 = *Garland*, Philip no. XXII.

[464] Influence with the King, fame and good health as a result of building a Serapeum: *PZenon* 59034 l. 19–21 = Totti no. 71; success in trade: Isidorus, *Hymn* 2 l. 5f = Totti no. 22: ὅσσοι σοὶ εὔχονται ἐπ' ἐμπορίην τε παρεῖναι, πλουτοῦσ' εὐσεβέες εἰς τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον; Osiris promises Lucius success as an advocate: Apuleius, *Met.* 11.27: *nam et illi* (i.e. Lucius) *studiorum gloriam et ipsi* (i.e. the *pastophorus*) *grande compendium sua* (i.e. Osiris') *comparari providentia*; 30: *liberali deum providentia iam stipendiis forensibus bellule fotum.*

[465] He continues: "…The rhetorician Aristides was deeply devoted to Sarapis as a god able to save from sickness and shipwreck and to work other miracles…": Nock 1932, 355 (= 1972, 1: 304).

[466] Ovid, *Met.* 9.666–797, cf. Dunand 1973, 2: 83: "Il n'y apparaît rien qui soit spécifiquement crétois".

family, Telethusa goes to the temple to pray to Isis for help. The goddess replies by shaking her altars and causing the temple-doors to rumble; then the miracle occurs: *nam quae femina nuper eras, puer es* (l. 790f.), and is—rather oddly, given the situation—properly documented by a votive tablet: *Dona puer solvit quae femina voverat Iphis* (l. 794).[467] The truth of the narrative is underwritten by Ovid's implied *theoria*.[468]

Perhaps the most characteristic mode of intervention by Isis and Serapis was their protection of sailors, an area of activity that was both grounded in and ratified by the main spring festival of the *Isidis navigium*. One of the Oxyrhynchus papyri contains a fragmentary account of a miracle narrated by the helmsman Syrios.[469] As reconstructed by Otto Weinreich, the story runs as follows: the narrator's ship, having been saved from wreck by Serapis, ran out of fresh water; but Syrios let a bucket down into the sea, drew it up, found it was sweet, and attributed the miracle to Serapis.[470] After an intervention by an unknown party (possibly a manifestation of the god) the miraculous water was sold to the people of Pharos, and an account of the miracle (ἀρετή) deposited in the temple of Thoth-Mercury. The by-standers gave thanks: οἱ παρόντες εἴπατε "εἷς Ζεὺς Σάραπις".

The hymn to Isis from Andros recounts how Isis

> πράτα δ' ἐπὶ σέλματι δούρων
> κολπωτὰν ὀθόναισι θοὰν τρόπιν ἰθύνεσκον
> οἶδμα καθιππεύοισα, δαμαζομένας δὲ θαλάσσας
> ὠκυπόροις ἐλάταις ἑλικὰν ἔστασε χορείαν
> Δωρίδος εὐλοχία.…[471]

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[467] This is the sole version of the Telethusa story to survive, but Nicander knew an identical miracle by Leto (Phytia), in favour of Galatea, wife of Lampros of Phaestus, and her daughter/son named Leucippus: Antoninus Liberalis no. 17. Nicander explained the name of the festival Ἐκδύσια by this means: τὸν πέπλον ἡ παῖς ἐξέδυ; cf. G. Weicker, s.v. Galateia 2, *RE* 7 (1910) 518f.; Nilsson 1906, 370f.

[468] I. Rutherford, Tourism and the Sacred: Pausanias and the Traditions of Greek Pilgrimage, in S.E. Alcock et al. (eds.), *Pausanias: Travel and Memory in Roman Greece* (Oxford 2001), 40–52 at 42f.

[469] *POxy* 1382 = Totti no. 13; the papyrus is dated II^{p}.

[470] See Weinreich 1919, 13–18; Aelius Aristides, Or. 45.29: οὗτος ὕδωρ ἀνῆκε πότιμον ἐν μέσῃ θαλάττῃ, alludes to the same miracle. The waters of the Nile, especially at the time of the flood, flow a considerable way into the Mediterranean.

[471] "Standing on the deck, I was the first to guide responsive ships, their sails swelling, over the sea; the glorious progeny of Doris has staged a plunging dance on the sea tamed by swiftly-travelling vessels…: *IG* XII.5, 739 = Totti no. 2 = *RICIS* 202/1801, ll. 152–6, §50). The date is uncertain, but probably late I^{a}.

This myth-history asserts a norm, that the waves of the sea shall be mastered by ships' hulls, and implies that Isis will ever be at hand to ensure that it is so; at the same time, the subtext implied by double reference to danger from wind and waves reminds the reader of the constant uncertainty of journeying by sea (Dunand 1973, 2: 117f.). Rather more than a century later, in his proempticon for M. Maecius Celer (cos. suff. AD 101), Statius composed a literary prayer for the officer's voyage from Puteoli to the East:

> *Isi, Phoroneis olim stabulata sub antris,*
> *nunc regina Phari numenque Orientis anheli,*
> *excipe multisono puppim Mareotida sistro;*
> *ac iuvenem egregium…*
> *ipsa manu placida per limina festa sacrosque*
> *duc portus urbesque tuas.*[472]

Here the two injunctions, *excipe* and *duc*, express the wish that the deity pay personal attention to the ship's fate: the rattle of the sistrum is to scare away misfortune; the accumulation of positive adjectives, *manu placida, limina festa, sacros portus*, alludes to the common phraseology of prayers for successful outcomes, while artfully evoking the milling crowds in the harbour of Alexandria (or Caesarea Maritima).[473] The goddess did not dispense σωτηρία indiscriminately: her aid was focused upon particular situations and emergencies, and of course the uncertainties of the deep sea meant that there were many occasions when her help, like that of the Great Gods of Samothrace, could be invoked.[474] In return, grateful sailors offered votive-plaques illustrating the storm they had survived.[475] Who wanted to be reminded that her failures could hardly reproach her from the depths?

Another type of danger was sexual violence. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, female chastity was a central value in the Egyptian

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[472] "Isis, once stabled in Inachus' caverns, now Queen of Pharos and deity of the sultry Orient, take (this) Egyptian vessel under the protection of your rattling sistrum and with a peaceful hand guide this eminent young man yourself to harbours decked for rejoicing and to port-cities under your special protection" (*Silvae* 3.2.101–7). Celer (*PIR*^{2} M 51) had been appointed legionary legate in Syria by Domitian, probably in AD 94. On the cult of Isis in Statius, cf. S. Montero, Los dioses egipcios en Estacio, *Habis* 10–11 (1979–80) 241–53.

[473] *Placidus* first occurs as an epithet of gods in the Augustan period; the adjectives evoke the common wish *quod bonum faustum felixque sit*, cf. Hickson 1993, 58f.; 62–83.

[474] E.g. the casual mention in *AnthPal* 6.231 l. 7 = *Garland*, Philip no. XXII of being saved from the sea: ὡς ἐκ πελάγους ἐρρύσαο (i.e. Isis) Δᾶμιν.

[475] Juvenal, *Sat.* 12.27f.: *pictores quis nescit ab Iside pasci?* (cf. n. 412 above).

cults, and Isis' role in inventing and maintaining marriage is an important theme in the aretalogical literature.[476] It is therefore not surprising to find her being appealed to in Xenophon's *Ephesiaka*.[477] When, after numerous adventures, Anthia is taken by the robbers to Memphis, and Polyidos, after defeating them, besets her with importunities, she eludes him and runs to the temple of Isis: σύ με, εἶπεν, ὦ δέσποινα Αἰγύπτου, πάλιν σῶσον, ἧ ἐβοήθησας πολλάκις· φεισάσθω μου καὶ Πολύιδος τῆς διὰ σὲ σώφρονος Ἀβροκόμῃ τηρουμένης.[478] Polyidos then swears to respect her chastity, but takes her to Alexandria, where his wife abuses her and sells her a slave to a brothel-keeper in Tarentum.[479] Later in the same book, the two lovers, now united, go to the temple of Isis in Rhodes and thank the goddess for her aid in bringing them safely, i.e. without the loss of their sexual purity, together once again: διὰ σέ, ὦ πάντων ἡμῖν τιμιωτάτη, ἑαυτοὺς ἀπειλήφαμεν (5.13.4). The central place of marital fidelity in the imaginary civic world of the novel is summarised by the narrator's claim that the search for Anthia was αὐτῷ τοῦ βίου παντὸς καὶ τῆς πλάνης ἡ ὑπόθεσις, the basis of Habrocomes' entire life and all his journeying.[480] Although this is obviously a fictional exaggeration, Swain is surely right to see conjugality as one important aspect of the values of the civic élites of the eastern Mediterranean, which helped to guarantee the viability of the οἰκός both as a private institution and as the basis of the public life of the city (1996, 127f.)

But sometimes prayer was offered without immediate gain in mind, as a mark of repentance or simply as disinterested praise. In such cases, prayer approaches its pure religious form, as total surrender to the deity, a true *deditio in fidem*, without any ulterior motive. The early encomium

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[476] See Chap. 3 n. 133 above; also Malaise 1972a, 169; Dunand 1973, 3: 261–5; Heyob 1975, 45–52; 66–80.

[477] The lucubrations of Merkelbach 1962, 72–90, extrapolated from Kerényi 1927, are entirely fanciful; cf. Swain 1996: 108 n. 21: "The novels' interest in religious matters simply reflects the pervasive nature of religion in ancient society at all periods". Isis appears as the goddess of the marriage-bond in Achilles Tatius, *Kleitophon and Leucippe* 5.26.4.

[478] *Ephesiaka* 5.4.6; cf. Merkelbach 1995, 361–3.

[479] In an analogous earlier incident, Anthia claims to Psammis that at her birth her father had dedicated her as a ἱερὰ τῆς Ἴσιδος, which seems to mean that she was vowed to chastity until she was married (3.11.4), cf. Merkelbach 1962, 104; Dunand 1973, 3: 170.

[480] 5.8.2. The fictional date of the story is vaguely 'Hellenistic'; the novel may have been written between AD 100–150, but I rather incline to Dalmeyda's scepticism that it is datable at all.

of Isis from Maronea in Thrace stands out in this connection.[481] The author had evidently had his eye-sight restored by the goddess (ὥσπερ οὖν ἐπὶ τῶν ὀμμάτων, Ἶσι, ταῖς εὐχαῖς [ἐπήκ]ουσας…l. 6f.). Since the goddess attended the speaker when he implored help from her, *a fortiori* she will attend now that his only intention is to praise her (πῶς ὑπὲρ τῆς ἰδίας τιμῆς οὐκ ἂν ἔλθοις; l. 11). He has every confidence that he will be heard, since an encomium may be penned by human hands but is in fact inspired by god (γιγνώσκων ὁτὶ τὸ ἐγκώμιον, νοῦς μὲν θεοῦ, χεῖρες δὲ γράφουσιν ἀνθρώπου…l. 12f.).[482]

The phraseology of Lucius' prayer while still an ass at the beginning of Book 11, and that of his thanksgiving some chapters later, after he has regained human form, are likewise clearly modelled upon the pattern of the encomium.[483] The second passage concludes with the assurance to the goddess of constantly-renewed personal devotion:

> *quod solum potest religiosus quidem, sed pauper alioquin, efficere curabo: divinos tuos vultus numenque sanctissimum intra pectoris mei secreta conditum perpetuo custodiens imaginabor.*[484]
>
> *Met.* 11.25

A similar idea is to be found in the poem of Damaios at Thessalonike, already mentioned, where the speaker asserts that if Osiris, as requested, sends good reputation and good health to Phylakides and his two sons, he will have taught mankind the lesson of piety: ὄφρα τις ἀμερίων λεύσσων τάδε θυμὸν ὀτρύνηι σφωΐτερομ μακάρωμ μήποτε λῆστιν ἔχειν.[485]

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[481] *SEG* 26 (1976) 821 = Grandjean 1975, 17–21 = Totti no. 19 = *RICIS* 114/0202 (I[a]). The encomium of Serapis by Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 45.16–32, is calqued upon such compositions.

[482] Cf. Grandjean 1975, 38–44 on the motif of divine inspiration in the classical tradition, e.g. Pindar, *Pyth.* 79–82. O. Weinreich, Hymnologica, *ARW* 17 (1914) 527–30 collects some apt passages from Aelius Aristides, e.g. *Or. sacr.* 4.31 (vol. 2, p. 433 Keil; tr. Behr, p. 324) ἦλθε γάρ μοι ἐνύπνιον φράζον τόν τε παιᾶνα ὡς δέον ποιῆσαι τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἅμα τὴν ἀρχὴν αὐτοῦ…; 39 (p. 435 K., tr. Behr, p. 326): ἦκεν δὲ καὶ παρ' Ἀθηνᾶς ὄναρ ὕμνον ἔχον τῆς θεοῦ καὶ ἀρχὴν τοιάνδε….

[483] *Met.* 11.2; 25.

[484] "I shall therefore take care to do the only thing that a devout but poor man can: I shall store your divine countenance and sacred godhead in the secret places of my heart, forever guarding it and picturing it to myself" (tr. Hanson).

[485] "So that a man may behold this and urge himself never to forget the gods, who have no cares": *IG* X.2, 108 ll. 9f. = Totti no. 72 = *RICIS* 113/0506; cf. n. 379 above.

Here the emphasis is clearly upon the μήποτε, on the continued living presence of the god in the heart.

The hymns of Isidorus from Medinet Madi in the Fayyûm provide another good example of the type of encomium offered Isis. In Hymn 1, after listing some of her inventions and gifts of nature (light, winds, the Nile flood), and surveying the foreign peoples who glorify her name, he concludes:

> Mighty one, I shall not cease to sing of Your great Power,
> Deathless saviour, many-named, mightiest Isis,
> Saving from war, cities and all their citizens:
> Men, their wives, possessions, and children.
> As many as are bond fast in prison, in the power of death,
> As many as are in pain through long, anguished, sleepless nights,
> All who are wanderers in a foreign land,
> And as many as sail on the Great Sea in winter
> When men may be destroyed and their ships wrecked and sunk…
> All (these) are saved if they pray that You be present to help.
> Hear my prayers, O One whose Name has great Power;
> Prove yourself merciful to me and free me from all distress.[486]
>
> Hymn I, ll. 25–36 (Bernand 1969, 633) = Vanderlip 1972, 17f. = Totti no. 21

In view of my earlier discussion (see chap. 3.3) of the aretalogy as a genre, it is unnecessary to pursue this issue further. It is more worthwhile to look at some individual practices. One custom known from Egypt is the *proskynema*, adoration of the deity, which was a term denoting a pilgrimage to the temple in order to adore the deity.[487] An early example from the temple of Isis at Philae is a pilgrimage performed by an extremely important official of the Ptolemaic court, the ἐπιστρατηγός Callimachus II, governor of Upper Egypt, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, in the mid-first century BC, on behalf of the King, Ptolemy XII Auletes: ἥκω πρὸς τὴν κυρίαν Ἶσιν καὶ πεπόηκα τὸ προσκύνημα τοῦ κυρίου βασιλέως θεοῦ νέου Διονύ<σ>ου Φιλοπάτορος Φιλαδέλφου.[488]

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[486] Tr. Vanderlip; part of this section was cited earlier in relation to miracle, n. 100 above. Cf. also Hymn 2, 5–8: "All who pray to you…if they (but) pray to you, (they) quickly obtain renewal (of life) from you"; l. 29f.: "Grant a share of your gifts also to me, Lady Hermouthis, your suppliant.…".

[487] The evidence for one aspect of such pilgrimage, Isiac footprint-votives, is collected by Takács 2005, 361–6.

[488] *OGIS* 186 = *SB* 4084 = Bernand and Bernand 1969, 1: 306–11 no. 52 = Totti no. 27. On the man, and his father, see briefly Fraser 1972, 1: 182; 2: 189f. n. 82; on this type of *proskynema*, ibid. 2: 315 n. 401.

This approach was presumably on behalf of the entire kingdom. At a lower social level, a common intention was to obtain a blessing for the whole family. A simple, and fairly ungrammatical, example, written on another of the pylons of the temple of Isis at Philae (where dozens of such messages have been found), reads: τὸ προσκύνημα Ἁρκίνιν τὸν καὶ Ἀπολλώνιον καὶ τῆς συνβίου αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν τέκνων καὶ τοῦ οἴκοι ὅλου παρὰ τῆς μυριονοίμου Ἴσιδος, σήμερον, ἐπ' ἀγαθῷ, (ἔτους) λα, Φαμενὼθ κθ.[489]

Such pilgrimages might indeed be repeated over years: a series of late texts from the memorial temple of the Female King Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari (Western Thebes) records irregular visits made over a thirty-year period by a sodality of iron-workers (πλῆθος σιδηρουργῶν) from Hermonthis to offer sacrifice and adore the god. The organiser seems to have been a professional scribe-cum-priest named Hatres son of Horion; the events took place over two days, including an overnight stay in the temple precinct and no doubt a ritual banquet in the late afternoon. The best-preserved dipinto specifies that the animal offered to the god was a donkey, a typical victim in Egypt in honour of the great gods, though virtually unknown in Greece and Italy, where the animal was considered unsuitable for sacrifice: αὐτὸς (the donkey-keeper Plenis) ἔσφαξεν τὸν ὄνον ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πάντες τὸ προσκύνημα….τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ ἐποί[ησαν.[490] One of the characteristic features of these texts is the wish ἐπ' ἀγαθῷ; another is the participle μνησθείς.[491] Both also occur in the context of the Egyptians cults in the Mediterranean, for example at Delos, Pompeii, Ostia, Rome, and in North Africa, indicating that the practice of adoration-pilgrimage was known there too. The graffito at Pompeii, for example, records the *proskynema* of a man from Beroia, no doubt in gratitude for a safe voyage: ἐμνήσθη Θεόφιλος Βερόης ἐπ' ἀγαθῷ παρὰ τῇ Κυρίᾳ.[492]

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[489] "The *proskynema* of Harkinis, also known as Apollonios, and his wife and his children, and their entire household, before Isis of the many names, today, 31st year (of Commodus), 29 Phamenoth (i.e. late March, AD 191)": *SB* 8681 = Bernand and Bernand 1969, 2: 166–74 no. 168 = Totti no. 35 ll. 14–19; on the finds at Philae, cf. Dunand 1973, 1: 150–9.

[490] *SEG* 41 (1991) 1612 ll. 8f., dated Dec. 27/8th AD 324.

[491] E.g. the *proskynema* of Sarapias at Philae, AD 4: ἥκω{ι} πρὸς μεγάλην Εἶσιν τὴν ἐν Φίλαις μνείαν ἐπ' ἀγαθῶι τῶν γονέων ποιούμενος καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν καὶ φίλων μου κατ' ὄνομα…Bernand and Bernand 1969, 2: 111f. no. 151 ll. 2–4 = Totti no. 30.

[492] *CIL* IV 4289 = Tran tam Tinh 1964, 178 no. 156 = Malaise 1972b, 266 Pompéi no. 26 = *RICIS* 504/0215. There must have been a civic sanctuary of *Isis Lochia* at

The second practice to be noted here is healing.[493] Since the main vector of disease in Egypt was considered to be a pathogenic or miasmatic movement of the air termed *ḏḥrt* (*deheret*), 'bitterness', brought about by the messengers of Sekhmet, healing was a very important aspect of the services provided by Egyptian temples to their community.[494] The specifically religious methods used hardly differed from those employed by 'secular' and the many types of free-lance practitioners: in the Late Period they mainly focused upon drinking water that had been poured over certain statues or inscribed stelai of the gods, particularly Horus as *shed* ('saviour', but also 'reciter of texts')—a famous example is the Metternich stele now in the Metropolitan Museum, whose obverse shows Horus with Isis and other gods.[495] The water was supposed to pick up the magical force of the texts it washed over. Many such stelai and statues are equipped with a shallow basin in front for collecting the water thus fortified. At Dendera, and probably in many other late temples, patients were expected not merely to drink but to immerse themselves entirely. Cures, and protection from dangers such as scorpion-stings and snake-bites, could also be obtained by reading sacred texts, or touching the papyrus on which they were written.[496] Complementary to this 'magical' healing, a variety of surgical interventions was undertaken, and a complex pharmacopoeia applied to a great variety of lesions and ailments.[497] In the Late Period, there were also at least two specialist healing-gods, known to have been illustrious

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Beroea in Macedon, cf. *RICIS* 113/0301; Bricault 2001, 23 Map VII with comm. on p. 24; Dunand 1973, 2: 190.

[493] Griffiths 1975, 166; Malaise 1980, 108f.; Frankfurter 1998, 46–52; Dunand 2006.

[494] Cf. Étienne 2000, 56–9. On the overlap of the roles of priest, magician and healer in Egypt, for example the *kherep Serket* in the Late period, see Koenig 1994, 30–2.

[495] See e.g. L. Kákosy, La magia nell'antico Egitto, in AA.VV., *La magia in Egitto ai tempi dei Faraone. Mostra Milano 1985* (Modena 1985) 7–101 at 59–66; König 1994, 100–12. Horus as *shed*: e.g. *PHarris* VII.12–VIII.1 (p. 64f. no. Q ed. H.O. Lange).

[496] Statues representing illustrious persons might show them holding such stelai or texts (e.g. the 'statue Tyszkiewicz' in the Louvre: Étienne 2000, 111 no. 207, fig. on p. 66); placed in a temple, these images would in turn be effective for protection and healing.

[497] The standard work is W. Westendorf, *Handbuch der altägyptischen Medizin* (Leyden 1999); cf. also B. Ebbell (ed.), *Die alt-ägyptische Chirurgie (P. Smith and P. Ebers)* (Oslo 1939); M. Helbling, *Der altägyptische Augenkranke, sein Artzt und seine Götter* (Zürich 1980); W.M. Pahl, *Altägyptische Schädelchirurgie* (Stuttgart 1993). On the pharmacopoeia, apart from Westendorf: R. Germer, *Katalog der altägyptischen Pflanzenreste der Berliner Museen* (Wiesbaden 1988); eadem, *Die Heilpflanzen der Ägypter* (Zürich 2002); T. Pommerening, *Altägyptische Heilpflanzen* (Stuttgart 2005) (popular).

doctors in former times: Imhotep-Imouthes, 'son of Ptah', and Amenhotep-Amenotes, who healed the sick at Deir el-Bahari in Western Thebes (on the upper terrace of the Hatshepsut-temple) and at Philae. Both were identified with Asclepius in the Graeco-Roman period.[498] Imhotep-Imouthes also possessed a temple close to the Serapeum in Memphis/Sakkara. Demetrius of Phaleron, the pupil of Theophrastus, vouched that he had been cured of blindness by Serapis at his shrine at Canopus in the Delta.[499]

Although the aretalogies are conspicuously silent about her powers in this area, there are many Dynastic-Egyptian Isis-texts for healing;[500] at her shrine at Dendera there was a sort of 'hospital' where immersions took place; and, at any rate in the popular religion of Alexandria in the Ptolemaic period, she was closely associated with the protection of family, childbirth and children.[501] As we have seen, Isidorus' Hymn II expressly comments on her ability to heal the seriously ill,[502] and in the late first century BC her role as healer is attested by a well-known passage of Diodorus:

> Standing above the sick in their sleep she gives them aid for their diseases (κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους ἐφισταμένην διδόναι τοῖς κάμνουσι βοηθήματα πρὸς τὰς νόσους) and works remarkable cures upon those who submit themselves to her (τοὺς ὑπακούσαντας αὐτῇ παραδόξως ὑγιάζεσθαι); and many who have been despaired of by their physicians because of the difficult nature of the malady are restored to health by her, while numbers who have already lost the use of their eyes or of some other part of their body, whenever they turn for help to this goddess (ὅταν πρὸς ταύτην τὴν θεὸν καταφύγωσιν), are restored to their previous condition.[503]

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[498] Numerous dipinti in Greek were found in the shrine, expressing gratitude to Amenotes (always named Asclepius), cf. F. Bataille, *Les inscriptions grecques du temple de Hatshepsout à Deir-al-Bahari* (Cairo 1951); the best treatment is now Lajtar 2006. The best-known is that of Athenodorus, *tesserarius* of the "First Vexillation" of auxiliary troops, who was able to enter the inner *cella* and there come face to face with 'Asclepius' and be healed: Bataille, *ibid.*, 85–9 no. 126 = Totti no. 17.

[499] Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. phil.* 5.92, cf. von Arnim, s.v. Demetrios no. 85, RE 4 (1901) 2817–41 at 2834f.

[500] E.g. J.F. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* (Leyden 1978) 48f. no. 80; 59f. no. 90; 74f. no. 102 etc.; *PHarris* VII 8–12 (p. 61f. no. P ed. H.O. Lange). Isis' association with magic is doubtless also relevant, cf. Dunand 1979, 113–19.

[501] The association with the family was of course stimulated by the motif of Isis suckling Horus the Child, cf. Dunand 1973, 1: 95f.

[502] Isidorus, *Hymn* II l. 7f. (p. 35 Vanderlip).

[503] Diodorus Siculus, 1.25.5 (tr. C.H. Oldfather); cf. Aelius Aristides, *Or.* 26.105; 27.39; 36.124 (Isis and Serapis together).

The Egyptian gods seem to have been adopted fairly widely as healing-gods in the eastern Mediterranean. A number of votive gifts of body-parts appear in the Delian treasury-lists, which clearly imply that healing was conducted both in the Iseum and in Serapeum C.[504] I have alluded above to the story of Lenaeus and his blinded charger, which was healed by Serapis.[505] The late third-century AD—or even early fourth-century—*Selbstoffenbarung* of Karpokrates from Chalkis on Euboea, unlike the earlier analogous texts, explicitly claims that the god invented the use of simples: πᾶσαν φαρμακείαν ἰατροῖς εἰς σωτηρίαν [e.g. τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπενόησα.…] Τειτάνιος, Ἐπιδαύριος.[506] The best-known case is of course that of Aelius Aristides, who devoted the five years of his life prior to his 'conversion' to Asclepius to intense worship of Serapis, and indeed renewed his commitment when he returned to Smyrna: "Of all the gods whom Aristides worshipped, aside from Asclepius, none held a more important place in his life and belief than Sarapis" (Behr 1968, 149).

The statement by Diodorus raises the question of whether incubation (ἐγκοίμησις, *incubatio*) was known in the Graeco-Roman cult of Isis and Serapis, and if so, how widespread it may have been.[507] We must of course distinguish here between the two types of incubation conventionally recognised, therapeutic and divinatory (Renberg 2006, 105). As my sketch of Egyptian healing-practices suggests, incubation

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[504] E.g. two eyes on a plaque, uninscribed; some eyes in gold, given by C. Messius; a golden eye given by Epiteugmas; a pair of eyes in relief on a pinax, given by Demetria; numerous other eyes; some fingers, by P. Aemilius; some genitals; an ear; a silver throat; two small feet; etc.: *ID* 1417 = RICIS 202/0424; ID 1452 = RICIS 202/0433. From the useful index in R. Hamilton, *Treasure Map: A Guide to the Delian Inventories* (Ann Arbor 2000) 465–79, it seems that such objects were offered *only* to the Egyptian gods on the island.

[505] Aelian, *NA* 11.31, cited p. 180 above.

[506] Harder 1944, 7–18 = Totti no. 6 = *RICIS* 104/0206 l. 11; cf. Dunand 1973, 2: 152–4. 'Karpokrates' is a late rendition of Harpokrates; the text was compiled by a local rhetor, drawing upon the encomium/aretalogical topoi. The epithet Ἐπιδαύριος is likewise unique in the genre, and clearly reinforces the medical claim; Τειτάνιος: a glancing reference to Titane near Sicyon, famous for its temple of Asclepius (Pausanias 2.11.5–8; 23.4; 7.23.8, cf. Herondas 4.14–16; Edelstein 1945, T.555 and 536).

[507] L. Deubner, *De incubatione capita quattuor* (Gießen 1900); N. Lewis, *The Interpretation of Dreams and Portents* (Toronto 1976); A. Martín-Artajo, En torno a la *incubatio*, in Alvar, Blánquez and Wagner 1994, 135–43. In the context of initiation and thence salvation: M,J. Hidalgo, Los oraculos y los sueños-visiones como vehículos de salvación en las novelas greco-romanas, in Alvar, Blánquez and Wagner 1992, 175–204.

in the Greek sense was not traditionally practised there.[508] However, the equation of Imhotep-Imouthes with Asclepius in the Ptolemaic period seems to have led to a limited introduction of Greek therapeutic incubation, at least in the Delta area. Strabo at any rate confirms that incubation for cures, both on one's own account and for others, was a feature of the 'very holy' temple of Serapis at Canopus in the western Delta.[509] There was indeed a regular genre of dreams that resulted in genuine cures: a certain Artemon of Miletus filled twenty-two books with them, many of them figuring Serapis.[510] Aelius Aristides, who repeatedly invokes the healing powers of the Egyptian gods, specifies that these were performed, as in the case of Asclepius, through divine visions, θείας ὄψεις.[511]

The influence of the model of the Epidaurian ἰάματα on healing practice in Roman Egypt—or at any rate on its temple-propaganda—is suggested by a first-person miracle-narrative written on the verso of the Oxyrhynchus papyrus in the Bodleian that contains the encomium of Isis, dating from the first half of the second century AD (*POxy* 1380). Col. v contains the following narrative:

> It was night, when every living creature was asleep except those in pain, but divinity showed itself the more effectively (τὸ δὲ θεῖον ἐνεργέστερον ἐφαίνετο, l. 94f.); a violent fever burned me, and I was convulsed with loss of breath and coughing owing to the pain proceeding from my side. Heavy in the head with my troubles, I was lapsing half-conscious into sleep, and my mother, as a mother would for her child…was sitting without enjoying even a short period of slumber (μηδὲ καθ' ὀλίγον ὕπνου μεταναλαμβάνουσα, 106f.), when suddenly she perceived—it was no dream or sleep, for her eyes were open immovably, though not seeing clearly (ὀφθαλμοὶ γὰρ ἦσαν ἀκείνητοι διηνοιγμένοι, βλέποντες μὲν οὐκ ἀκριβῶς, l. 109–12)—a divine and terrifying vision, easily preventing her from observing the god or his servants, whichever it was. In any case there was someone whose height was more than human, clothes in shining raiment and carrying in his left hand a book, who, after merely regarding me two or three times from head to foot, disappeared. When

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[508] Oracular incubation, analogous to katarchic astrology, was however a common feature of Egyptian religious practice; cf. J.D. Ray, *The Archive of Hor.* Texts from Excavations 2 (London 1976); Depauw 1997, 150.

[509] Strabo 17.1.17, 801C: καὶ ἐγκοιμᾶσθαι αὐτοὺς ὑπὲρ ἑαυτῶν ἢ ἑτέρους; Artemidorus, *Oneirocr.* 4.22 stresses the number of people who had been cured by dreams at Alexandria. See also Dunand 1973, 1: 112f.; 3: 141; Dunand 2006, 10.

[510] Demetrios: Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. philos*. 5.76; dream-books: Artemidorus, *Oneirocr.* 2.44.

[511] Aelius Aristides, Or. 47 (= *Sacred Tales* 1) 38, with Festugière 1986, ad loc.

> she had recovered herself she tried, still trembling, to wake me, and finding that the fever had left me and that much sweat was pouring off me, she did reverence to the manifestation of the god (τὴν μὲν τοῦ θεοῦ προσεκύνησεν ἐπιφάνειαν…, l. 131f.), and then wiped me and made me more calm. When I spoke to her she wished to declare the virtue of the god (τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ…ἀρετήν, l. 135–7), but I, anticipating her, told her all myself; for everything that she saw in the vision had appeared to me in my dreams (ὅσα γὰρ διὰ τῆς ὄψεως εἶδεν, ταῦτα ἐγὼ δι' ὀνειράτων ἐφαντασιώθην, l. 138–40).
>
> *POxy* 1381, ll. 91–140, tr. Grenfell and Hunt = Totti no. 15

This sophisticated reflected I-narrative uses the device of an extra-diegetic stance within the frame of a homo-diegetic one in order to lend the account greater authenticity.[512] What would have been a relatively unconvincing narrative: "I saw in a dream…" has been lent authority by having the events described by someone other than the main narrator, namely the mother in a directly-experienced utterance. This confirmation is then undermined by the expression βλέποντες μὲν οὐκ ἀκριβῶς (itself a trope in this genre), which suggests that, while she could not really confirm it, it was after all her piety that induced her not to stare rudely.[513] This concession is then countered by the dream-vision, normally weak, which now appears paradoxically as a sort of by-miracle, a divine triumph. What might have appeared as one of those "expériences insituables que constitue le passé onirique" has become "le passé vraiment vécu".[514] Personal appearances by divinity gave a special status to the recipient of the miracle, and underscored the temple's claim—I take it the experience took place, or was claimed to have taken place, in a temple—to being a privileged point of mediation, at a time when their economic status was already under threat.[515]

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[512] To use the terms introduced by G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse* (Ithaca and Oxford 1980); cf. M. Martinez and M. Scheffel, *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie*[3] (Munich 2002) 47–67.

[513] Similar details are found in other traditions, for example the accounts of the appearances of the Lord of the Wounds in Oaxaca in summer 1911: "Most of them…did not dare to look up at the Lord as the entire house shook": E. Wright-Rios, Envisioning Mexico's Catholic Resurgence: The Virgin of Solitude and the Talking Christ of Tlacoxcalco 1908–1924, *Past & Present* 195 (2007) 197–239 at 224.

[514] G. Genette, Silences de Flaubert, in *Figures 1* (Paris 1966) 223–43 at 233.

[515] Sauneron 1959, 51 has drawn attention to a Demotic papyrus describing an incubation that takes place in a humble dwelling lit by an oil lamp; as incense burns, the subject gazes at the flame until the god appears, and then lies down on a mat rush to receive the divine message. This is typical of the instructions for divination in the magical papyri.

On the other hand, it has recently been stressed that there is no positive evidence in the west for the practice of therapeutic incubation in the Egyptian cults: there are no allusions in the Latin epigraphy to healing personnel, and it is hard to find areas of excavated temples that might have been suitable for regular incubation (Renberg 2006, 114–6). Moreover, Horus-stelai are unknown outside Egypt, suggesting that there were strict limits to Graeco-Roman willingness to accept certain medical practices. It seems likely that, just as the practice of Egyptian 'magical' medicine failed to make headway outside Egypt, so Greek incubation failed to make any impact within the cult in the Latin-speaking west. Reception of the oriental cults, in this as in other areas, was always highly selective.

This leads us on to the other type of incubation, oracular, or, more loosely, to the general subject of visions and dreams in the cult. Personal contact with the deity sometimes went beyond inner communion and took on an external or apparitional form. This was primarily, as I have remarked, a means of registering the special status of the recipient: visions and dreams are a constant theme of Apuleius, *Met.* 11.19–30, where they chiefly function as a stimulus to initiation. Such manifestations might take any of a wide variety of forms. Sometimes the god's will was conveyed through miracles worked by the statue, or by means of an epiphany of some sort, usually at night. There are many epigraphic examples of dedications made as a result of visions and visitations, nocturnal and other, κατ' ὄναρ and κατὰ πρόσταγμα.[516] Frequently the significance of the response was not sufficiently clear to enable a decision to be made about how to act; then one had to consult an ὀνειροκρίτης for advice.[517] Aelius Aristides provides an example when he describes a vision, οὐκ ὄναρ ἀλλ' ὕπαρ, in response to a request, in which Apollo/Asclepius/Serapis had held up his fingers in such a way as to suggest that he would live either another 10 + 3 years, or

[516] E.g. *IG* X.2, 91 = *RICIS* 113/0569 (Thessalonike); L. Robert, *Hellenica* 1 (1940) 66f. no. 1 = *RICIS* 112/0705 (Demetrias); *IG* XI.4, 1247 l. 4 = *RICIS* 202/0124 (Serapeum A, Delos). For a full list, see *RICIS* p. 790, Index 5 s.v. ~.

[517] ὀνειροκρίτης: *ID* 2071 = 202/0217 (Serapeum C, Delos, shortly after 166 BC); ID 2120 = 202/0245 (ibid., 129/8 BC); *ID* 2151 = *RICIS* 202/0289 (ibid., 114/3 BC) etc.; female interpreters (nom. sing.: ὀνειροκρίτις): *IG* II/III² 4771 = *RICIS* 101/0221 (Asklepieion, Athens, c. AD 120); *ID* 2619 = *RICIS* 202/0209 col. i, 10 (Serapeum C, Delos, 95/4 BC); κρίνων τὰ ὁράματα: *SEG* 42 (1992) 157 = *RICIS* 101/0206 l. 16f. (Serapeion, Athens, between 116/5–95/4 BC); cf. Baslez 1977, 235f.

15 + 2.[518] Such uncertainties must have been rife when the visitation or sign was not specifically requested but resulted from the unilateral, and thus unanticipated, decision of the deity.[519] However this office is unattested in the Latin-speaking west, and we must assume that the institution of dream-interpretation, like that of therapeutic incubation, was not received there.[520]

At least in the eastern Mediterranean, nocturnal visitations were the Egyptian gods', and especially Serapis', regular means of communicating the demand to erect a new statue or construct a new sanctuary. Here history and policy came together. Dreams were already a feature of the cult of Osarapis at Memphis in the Saitic period; and where conventional civic imperatives fail, wonders must supply the deficit. One example is the dream in which Ptolemy I Soter saw the colossus of Pluto at Sinope, οὐκ ἐπιστάμενος οὐδ' ἑωρακὼς πρότερον οἷος < ἦν > τὴν μορφήν, 'even though he was completely unfamiliar with its appearance'.[521] According to Plutarch, he finally found a man named Sosibios who told him what it was he had seen—at any rate, he identified the king's description with a statue he claimed to have seen at Sinope. In a similar vein, Isis is supposed to have told Seleucus IV Philopator by means of a dream to transport her 'horned statue' (τὸ βούκερων ἄγαλμα) from Memphis to Antioch on the Orontes.[522] Such messages are a stock-in-trade of the aretalogy. The Delian Serapis-aretalogy recounts how the god appeared in a dream to Apollonius, the grandson of the

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[518] Aelius Aristeides, *Or.*48 (= *Sacred Tales* 2) 18, with Festugière 1986, ad loc.

[519] Sometimes appearances of Serapis were less encouraging: Artemidorus, *Oneirocr.* 5.92–4 recounts three deaths after such manifestations; the 'Exchange of Moirai' text includes the detail that Serapis appeared to Thrason, the sick Libyan, to tell him to get drunk (and so die: [οἰνού]μενον δ' ἐγὼ σ' ἀποθεραπεύσω, l. 19), and to the poor Greek to fast (and so survive): *PBerol* 10525 = D.L. Page, *Select Papyri* 3: 424–9 no. 96 = Totti no. 12 (cf. Chap. 2 n. 10 above).

[520] In *IScythMin* 2 no. 152 = *RICIS* 618/1003 (Tomi), Bricault ingeniously reads: διὰ το[ῦ ὀν]ε[ιροκρίτ]ου ['Αρτεμ (?)] ιδώρου (l. 2f.)—the votive-gift would then be the result of advice by a dream-interpreter named Artemidorus. In itself this is attractive, but it would be the only example of the institution outside the Aegean area. It must therefore be considered doubtful: there have been many other suggestions for the lacuna (see his apparatus). On the other hand, it must be conceded that Tomi falls outside the Latin-speaking area of the empire.

[521] Plutarch, *De Iside* 28, 361f.; cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.83, and Chap. 2.1.a.ii.

[522] Libanius, *Or.* 14 (*Antiochikos*) 114f.; the expression alludes to Herodotus 2.41.2, a description of the statue of Isis/Hathor/Io, cf. Lloyd ad loc.; Dunand 1973: 3, 123, rightly sceptical, noting the similarity to the Ptolemy story; Malaise 1986, 99. Isis-Hathor statues were produced in Egypt from the Late Period, e.g. *Ausstellung Liebighaus* 620 no. 200; 652 no. 240 etc.

Egyptian priest Apollonius who had originally settled on Delos, and told him to build him a temple, since he no longer wished to reside in rented accommodation. After the acquisition of the land, and the building of the temple, Apollonius' enemies attempted to prosecute him for erecting a building illegally. But the god again appeared in a dream and reassured Apollonius that he would win the law-suit; the text we have was put up in celebration of this victory.[523] Something similar happened to Zoilos at (probably) Aspendus in 258/7 BC: Serapis appeared to him repeatedly in dreams and told him that a Serapeum must be built for him in the Greek quarter by the harbour. When Zoilos asked to be excused, he fell seriously ill. Meanwhile someone else arrived in the town with the same plan; but the god, evidently in yet another dream-manifestation, told him to stop building. The text we have is a letter requesting the recipient (a senior administrator in Philadelphia) to start the work.[524] The narrative of Xenainetos of Opus is still more marvellous: being in Thessalonike on official business, and visiting the Serapeum there, he dreamt that the god advised him to approach his political opponent Eurynomus for help: under his pillow he would find a letter to Eurynomus from the god with the appropriate instructions.[525]

Visions and dreams might also be directly requested.[526] Artemidorus recounts the case of a man at Alexandria who dreamed that he met someone who owed him money. He collected the debt in full and was given a receipt. The ὀνειροκριταί, evidently the specialists at the Serapeum in Alexandria, were at a loss, so the man prayed to Serapis for the solution. Serapis spoke to him in a dream, and explained that it was a play on words: if one collects a debt in full, one receives no interest

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[523] *IG* XI.4, 1299 ll. 12–28 = Totti no. 11 = *RICIS* 202/0101 (c. 200 BC), with Engelmann 1975 ad loc.

[524] *PZenon* 59034 = Totti no. 71, with the commentary of Weinreich 1919.

[525] *IG* X.2.1, 255 = Totti no. 14 = *RICIS* 113/0536 (inscribed I^{P}, but referring to an event at least two centuries earlier), with Dunand 1973, 2: 42–4; F. Sokolowski, Propagation of the Cult of Sarapis and Isis in Greece, *GRBS* 15 (1974) 441–8 at 441–5. We may suspect a similar encounter with the divinity in the case of the foundation of the Serapeum at Ampurias c. 50 BC by the Alexandrian Noumas (*IRCatalogne* 3 (1991) 46–8 no. 15; *AE* 1991: 1116 = *SEG* 42 (1992) 974; however, the text of Bricault, *RICIS* 603/0701, which omits all mention of Isis, seems to me the best; cf. J. Alvar, Los santuarios mistéricos en la Hispania republicana, *III Congreso Hispano-Italiano. Italia e Hispania en la crisis de la República, Toledo, sept. 1993* (Madrid 1998) 413–423, and the further bibliography in *IRCatalogne* 5 (2002) 83f.

[526] Cf. A.D. Nock, A Vision of Mandulis Aion, *HThR* 27 (1934) 53–104 at 71 = 1972, 1: 357–400 at 372; Vinagre 1994.

(τόκος). But τόκος also mean 'child': 'no interest' therefore means 'no child'.[527] Questions to oracles about everyday decisions, difficulties and uncertainties are attested, which may have been in practice requests for dreams.[528]

c. *Initiation*[529]

It was a common-place in the Egyptian cults that Isis herself had provided for the institution of initiation, which gave it a sacramental air.[530] This however seems to be a fairly recent claim, since there is no evidence for initiation from the Republican period. The likeliest scenario is that initiation became an option within the cult as it expanded into the eastern Mediterranean and encountered Greek initiatory practice, most probably, that is, in the later Hellenistic period.[531]

By far the fullest account available to us is Lucius' homo-diegetic narrative in Apuleius, Met. 11.22–4.[532] By way of preface here, I cannot do better than cite the remarks of S.J. Harrison:

> Overall, Apuleius' novel should be viewed as a confident written performance by a consummate stylist, who orchestrates his disparate matter into an artistic and carefully-constructed whole; despite its deployment of both religion and philosophy, its main purpose is not to improve the

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[527] Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 4.80. Artemidorus was told about this case by a certain Menekrates, possibly the grammarian from Miletus cited in the Homer-scholia (*RE* no. 26). The play on the two meanings of τόκος is of course a creaking *topos*: Sophocles frg. 477 N^2; Aristophanes, *Thesm.* 843–5; Plato, *Rep.* 6, 507a2–5 etc. Artemidorus claims that such dreams, which directly respond to the dreamer's anxieties, are non-significative (1.6). But here he evidently makes an exception.

[528] E.g. *POxy* 1148 = Hunt & Edgar, *Select Papyri* 1: 436f. no. 193 = *PGrM* XXXIb = Totti no. 56; *POxy* 1149; 1213; 2613; Isidore, *Etym.* 8.11 (86). A number of demotic oracle-questions were found, for example, in the library of the temple of Sobek at Soknopaiou Nesos (Depauw 1997, 161). There was also a (perhaps indigenous) Egyptian tradition of analytic dream interpretation, of which the fragmentary Demotic *P.Carlsberg* 13 and 14 verso (from Tebtunis, II^P) are the best known examples (cf. Depauw 1997, 107f.).

[529] It is suggested that the reader have a copy of Apuleius, *Met.* 11 to hand (preferably J.A. Hanson's Loeb edition) while reading this section.

[530] Diodorus Siculus 1.20.6: τούτους (i.e. Isis and Toth) δὲ καὶ τελετὰς καταδεῖξαι καὶ πολλὰ μυστικῶς εἰσηγήσασθαι, μεγαλύνοντας τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δύναμιν (with reference to the mysteries of Osiris); Plutarch, *De Iside* 27, 361e1f.: ταῖς ἁγιωτάταις ἀναμίξασα (i.e. Isis) τελεταῖς εἰκόνας καὶ ὑπονοίας καὶ μιμήματα τῶν τότε παθημάτων…

[531] Bianchi 1968a; Dunand 1975, 168; Alvar 1997.

[532] As I have already made clear, I take Bk. 11 to be in the main a plausible and to that extent reliable, albeit fictitious and idealising, account, despite its undeniably ironic and sceptical tone; cf. Mimbu Kilol 1994; Shumate 1996, and Chap. 2 n. 278 above.

> reader's morals or convey philosophical truth, but to provide entertainment of a subtle and challenging kind, and above all to demonstrate the talents and knowledge of the author.[533]

I base my view of the reliability of the information provided by the relevant passages of Bk. 11 on the fact that he was writing for a sophisticated audience capable of appreciating the truth-value of his account from its own circumstantial knowledge.[534] The issue of Apuleius' own belief does not arise: this is an imaginative fiction based on awareness of current religious trends and an acute insight into a certain religious mentality. It is moreover, as Griffiths' commentary amply confirms, broadly consonant with a great deal of parallel evidence that we possess both about the cult of Isis and about mystery revelation (Griffiths 1975). From that perspective, Winkler's assumption of perpetual irony begins to look like wilful self-delusion.

What are the essential points that emerge from Lucius' narrative? First, the motive for initiation was deemed to come not from the mere impulse of the individual worshipper, however insistent, but from a divine calling. It is a nod, a sign (*praeceptum*) from Isis that appoints the day on which an individual may be initiated, as well as the particular priest who is to perform the rites,[535] and even the exact nature of the expenses involved.[536] This requirement establishes a close but asymmetrical bond between divinity, mystagogue and candidate, based on the wider analogy of patron and client, or even master and slave (Alvar 1999). When it comes, however, the sign turns out to be given in a dream (*noctis obscurae non obscuris imperiis*: 22), and is thus in effect subject to personal decision, in accordance with the individual's financial resources and state of preparedness. It is clear that the issue of financial resources was central, and had implications for social relations

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[533] Harrison 1996, 516.

[534] Cf. Anderson 1982, 84: "The presence of allegory, symbol, Platonic allusion and Isiac initiation are obvious and undeniable".

[535] Cf. Malaise 1986b. We may take it that in practice there was a good deal of competition among priests to acquire 'clients' in this way, particularly in view of the emoluments thereby to be gained. This competition might well, no doubt, affect relations within the priestly group, and even have implications for the wider socio-religious life of the city concerned.

[536] 11.21: *nam et diem quo quisque possit initiari deae nutu demonstrari, et sacerdotem qui sacra debeat ministrare eiusdem providentia deligi, sumptus etiam caerimoniis necessarios simili praecepto destinari*; cf. Malaise 1986b. Both over-eagerness and 'obstinacy' (*contumacia*) are equally to be avoided here. For Winkler, of course, this stress is part of the strategy of authorial ambiguity (1985, 215–20).

within each Isiac group. We may assume that each candidate laid out what he or she could afford in the way of sacrifices, offerings, gifts and food-stuffs, which naturally meant that they contributed differentially to the running-costs of the temple. The priests could hardly have been indifferent to this disparity in scale of contribution, which in turn must have had implications for their attitude towards individuals, and for the self-presentation of the latter.[537] The group of initiates in fact reproduced on a small scale, and perhaps involuntarily, the social relations, the social asymmetry, the nice assessment of current financial standing, that prevailed in the larger world outside.[538]

The cult thus tended to adapt itself unselfconsciously to the interests and social values of its adherents: Lucius simply assumes that Isis and Osiris are keen to help him to worldly success as a lawyer, and indeed such success is specifically predicted for him in Asinius Marcellus' dream in Rome.[539] I am however rather sceptical of claims that the cult was instrumentalised directly in local politics: in my view, it was not so much their religious views as their collegiality that led the followers of Isis to such public intervention—the electoral propaganda of other groups is no different from theirs.[540] It is telling that Popidius Natalis, who campaigned *cum Isiacis* some time between AD 63–79 in support of Cuspius Pansa in the latter's campaign for the city aedileship, did so as the man's *cliens*.[541]

However that may be, once the day had been selected by the goddess, the mystagogue made the necessary arrangements. Apuleius brilliantly subjectivises the entire sequence of events: he has Lucius go to see

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[537] Note Lucius' farewell to Mithras, the priest of Isis at Cenchreae: *complexus Mithram sacerdotem… colloque eius multis osculis inhaerens, veniam postulabam quod eum condigne tantis beneficiis munerari nequirem*—but still of course gave him something: *Met.* 11.25–6.

[538] Money, or its lack, is a constant theme of *Met.* 11.18–30.

[539] *nam et illi studiorum gloriam et ipsi grande compendium sua comparari providentia*, "since by Osiris' providence the man would acquire fame for his studies and the priest himself ample recompense" (tr. Hanson). This sentiment is confirmed by Osiris himself at the very end of the book, in a direct appearance to Lucius: *quae nunc incunctanter gloriosa in foro redderem patrocinia*, "(bidding me) unhesitatingly to continue as now to win fame in the courts as an advocate" (tr. Hanson). Note that Lucius himself affects to be interested in the glory, not the sordid emoluments.

[540] On Isiac involvement in Pompeian elections, see Tran tam Tinh 1964, 42 (not always reliable); R. Étienne, *La vie quotidienne à Pompéi* (Paris 1966) 140.

[541] *CIL* IV 1011 = *RICIS* 504/0210. This Natalis may also be named on six hydriae found in the Iseum (*CIL* IV 2660 = *RICIS* 504/0211). On another occasion the *Isiaci universi* supported Cn. Helvius Sabinus in his campaign for the aedileship (*CIL* IV 787 = *RICIS* 504/0209). Bricault does not reprint the other texts that have been thought relevant here.

Mithras immediately after his vision; the priest takes him directly into the temple, and there gives him the practical instructions, taken from a book written in hieroglyphic characters (11.22).[542] There is then an interval of uncertain but considerable duration, while Lucius buys the requisites, including a splendid embroidered robe; narratalogically, however, the delay lasts only one sentence. The initiation itself is preceded by a lustration in the neighbouring public baths. Afterwards:

> He took me back to the temple, with two-thirds of the day now past, and put me right in front of the goddess' feet (*ante ipsa deae vestigia constituit*). Secretly he gave me certain instructions too holy for utterance (*quae voce meliora sunt*), and then openly, with all the company as witnesses, he ordered me to restrain my pleasure in food for the next ten days, not to partake of animal food, and to go without wine (*neque ullum animal essem et invinius essem*). I duly observed these restrictions with reverent continence (*venerabili continentia*).
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> *Met.* 11.23, tr. J.A. Hanson

The initiand is then 'presented to the gods'. This ritual takes place over three (incomplete) days. Towards evening on the first, *sacrorum ritu vetusto*, the temple is thronged with people bringing gifts for the candidate. The sudden accumulation of 'gift-debt' metonymically marks both his entry into a new community and its projection over time (for the asymmetry thus created will have to be 'worked off' by the initiate in the future).[543] This incipient shift of status (Van Gennep's *preliminal rite*) is at once reinforced by the candidate's being required to put on a specifically Egyptian sacred dress, a never-worn linen robe, and his admission by the priest into the *penetralia*. This double shift elevates him temporarily to the status of *religious professional*.[544] The uninitiated are required to leave.

The remainder of Chap. 23 suddenly shifts the subjective narration into a direct address to the *studiosus lector*: you want of course to know what happened next. There follows an interrogation of the reader's

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[542] "To give the name Mithras to the high-priest of Isis, whose role is to reveal to the first-reader a startling new meaning for *The Golden Ass*, is like introducing the pope in the last chapter of a detective novel and calling him Martin Luther" (Winkler 1985, 245). Here, as so often elsewhere, Winkler adds two and two and gets five. He also finds fault with the hieroglyphs, of course.

[543] Cf. *sed tandem deae monitu, licet non plene, tamen pro meo modulo supplicue gratis persolutis*…(11.24).

[544] Later of course he becomes a *pastophorus*, another order of religious professional.

motives. Mere curiosity? Or *desiderium religiosum*? Then a concession, more apparent than real: I will tell, but only what you may hear. In the famous passage I have already cited (pp. 123; 221), three ordinary impossibilities are named: return from (the threshold of) Hades that is somehow also an ascent through the planets; sunlight beheld in darkness; unmediated access to divinity. The experience of mystery is inherently paradoxical (a paradoxicality that has rightly been invoked to account for the oddity of tone in this book), just as the language of σύμβολα is deliberately enigmatic. As I have already observed, initiation inaugurates the paradox of a new life; the transition from one to the other allows one to shed one's old self and appear as a new being.[545] From this point of view, as the fragment of Plutarch cited in Chap. 2.2 suggests, the moment of initiation was one's 'true' death. As in the classic scheme of van Gennep, the liminal ritual itself is marked by the most dramatic negation of the rules that impose normality.[546] Kapferer explains: "The routine world of ordinary experience is broken down and its meanings and structures progressively dissolved. Alternatively, the gathering experience leads to the uncovering and construction of more and more hidden meanings and possibilities of life".[547] There is a systematic quality to this inversion: first the approach to the edge of ultimate release from suffering, the farthest limit of ordinary human existence, followed by an implied heavenly ascent *in formam dei* (*per omnia vectus elementa*), and then a return (to earth). Next an implied revelation of Osiris' nocturnal journey through the Underworld as the 'Dark Sun'.[548] Finally, a renewed journey from the Underworld to heaven (*deos inferos*

[545] I see no particular reason to think that hallucinogenics were used in these contexts. Suggestibility belonged to the initiand's state of mind, no doubt encouraged by fasting.

[546] T. Habinek, Lucius' Rite of Passage, *Materiali e discussioni* 25 (1999) 49–69 appeals to the analyses of Victor Turner in order to account for the three festivals that Lucius describes in *Met.* (at Hypata, Corinth and Cenchreae). Mimbu Kilol 1995, like others before, treats the events of the first ten books as the equivalent of Van Gennep's preliminal rites, and Bk. 11 as the liminal and postliminal rites. But on this view, the latter only begin at 11.13. Both schemes suffer from being mechanical applications of an extrinsic pattern upon the fiction, and seem to me to explain nothing. My allusions to Van Gennep's scheme are intended to suggest that it has some, but rather limited, use in this context—further one does not need to go.

[547] B. Kapferer, *The Feast of the Sorcerer: Practices of Consciousness and Power* (Chicago 1997) 229 (actually on the effects of the fear of sorcery among Sinhalese Buddhists in Ceylon).

[548] Although the narrative claims that admission to the mysteries of Osiris followed at a later date.

et superos accessi coram), where the emphasis is not so much on vision as on physical proximity to the godhead (*et adoravi de proximo*). These hints are an attempt by Apuleius to convey both something of the authentic experience of personal conversion and the contrast between revelation in the mysteries and the world of religious experience imagined by conventional pagan religiosity—though I admit it is easy to exaggerate the opposition between them.[549]

The next morning, the new initiate is revealed to the community of Isiac worshippers as a quasi-divine statue (*in vicem simulacri*):[550] he is made to stand on a wooden dais in the centre of the *penetralia*, directly in front of the goddess' statue, dressed in an intricately-embroidered linen cloak, the so-called *Olympiaca stola*, whose images allude to the Hyperboreans (viz. Apollo), India (viz. Dionysus), and no doubt other animals linked to deities from the Greek pantheon (*Met.* 11.24).[551] With his lighted torch and solar crown he evokes both Helios (*ad instar Solis*) and Osiris as the Dark Sun; but torches held by divinities (or their statues) have of course a long pedigree in the Eleusinian mysteries; and torches are a familiar emblem of triumph, victory and escape from danger/death.[552] As a statue, he becomes the object of reverential gaze: the curtains are suddenly opened, and the crowd is admitted in order to behold the spectacle (*repente velis reductis in aspectum populus errabat*).[553] This evokes the obvious pun in Greek between θεός and θέαμα: standing midway between the 'authentic' divine statue and the admiring populace, Lucius enjoys an epiphanic moment. As Elsner has argued, sight has a central role in constructing the ancient view of the sacred: "All the evidence which speaks of sight and the sacred is borrowing from a conceptual frame-work…where at least in some respect there can be

[549] Cf. Fick 1992; Shumate 1996.

[550] Cf. Bourdieu 1977, 151: "Every morning is a *birth*…The early riser is safe from the encounters which bring misfortune".

[551] In the particular context, this implies the transcendence of Lucius' existence as an ass. Nicole Fick has argued that the mythical animals mentioned, *dracones* and *gryphes*, recall the animals that decorate the walls of the palace of Amor/Cupid at Bk.5.1, and represent the two cosmic powers of masculinity and femininity: Du palais d'Éros à la robe olympienne de Lucius, *REL* 47 (1969) 378–96. It later turns out that this costly item had to be deposited in the temple at Cenchreae, so that Lucius has to have another one made in Rome (11.29).

[552] Cf. E. Parisinou, *The Light of the Gods* (London 2000) 85–88; 116f.

[553] It is far from clear whether the *populus* is actually admitted into the *penetralia*. Generally, as we have seen, the latter was strictly guarded. At this moment, however, the fiction has no place for such niceties.

movement out of the dualism of the subject and object and into some kind of unity beyond self and other…".[554] In this context, Apuleius uses the motif of being gazed at several times within a few lines: as a witness to support the veracity of Lucius' homo-diegetic narrative;[555] to call attention to the symbolic journey he has undergone;[556] rapidly to shift perspective from homo-diegetic to extra-diegetic and back, no doubt to hint at a unity 'beyond self and other': "From whichever angle you looked…I was conspicuous for…".[557] I read this section not so much as a literal description of a typical Isiac ceremony as yet another attempt at conveying the subjective experience of the altered status conferred by initiation.

In terms of narrative time, the first evening and night of the initiation ceremony occupy the great bulk of Lucius' account. The rest of the second and the entire third day are dismissed in a couple of sentences at the very end of 11.24: on the first, *et suaves epulae et faceta convivia*; then a *ientaculum religiosum* and the close of the ceremonies. No details are given. Had he bothered to examine the composition and preparation of the food consumed at such special occasions, we might have been able to pursue some of the symbolic implications, say of newness, of rebirth, of new life. But Lucius is no ethnographer, and we must be content with the idea of a transition accomplished and celebrated in keeping with the resources and cultural niveau that accord with one's social status.

It will be clear to the reader that my aim in highlighting the mediatory presence of Lucius' narrative here is to allow me to navigate between the straightforward, documentary, readings of a Nock or a Griffiths on the one hand, which now appear almost naive, and the purely literary reading of a Winkler on the other. If the account of initiation in *Met.* 11.22–4 is to be saved, it can only be as a literary attempt to convey an attitude of mind, a religious experience, a mystic longing rather than

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[554] Elsner 1995, 93–97; see also, from a quite different viewpoint, Sheer 2000, 66–70.

[555] *sed effari de eo nullo vinculo prohibeor, quippe quod tunc temporis videre praesentes plurimi* (11. 24).

[556] *byssina quidem, sed floride depicta veste conspicuus*. There is no satisfactory solution to the puzzle of the twelve robes (*duodecim sacratus stolis*) at the begining of 11.24 and the embroidered *vestis/clamys*. The *namque* that links the two sentences seems to imply that they are one and the same.

[557] *quaqua tamen viseres, colore vario circumnotatis insgnabar animalibus*. *Insignior* means both "I am marked by a sign or mark" and "I am made remarkable or noteworthy" (cf. the semantic range of *insignis*).

as a definitive sequence of ritual events. Moreover, Lucius' account, which includes analogous albeit far sketchier presentations of two further initiations, into the mysteries of Osiris at Rome, that are explicitly not the same as the ritual at Cenchreae—indeed, these mysteries are said to be very different from those of Isis (*teletae discrimen interesse maximum*: 11.27)—, makes clear that the version of §§22–4 has no claim to be thought of as normative or definitive. Although it is the most fully described, it is evidently just one among many possibilities—apparently the two initiations into the mysteries of Osiris in the same city were themselves not identical.

Nevertheless I would still want to claim that initiation is presented convincingly by the fictional Lucius as a sublime human experience, one able to stimulate a physical and a spiritual rebirth into a new life through knowledge of the divine, through cognisance of what Plutarch terms, in his Middle Platonic language, the First, the Majestic, the Intelligible (ἡ τοῦ πρώτου καὶ κυρίου καὶ νοητοῦ γνῶσις):

> The longing for truth, particularly for truth about the gods, is a yearning after divinity (θεότητος ὄρεξις), since it involves in its training and intellectual pursuit an acquirement of sacred lore (ἀνάληψιν ἱερῶν τὴν μάθησιν ἔχουσα καὶ τὴν ζήτησιν) which constitutes a holier task than all ceremonial purification and temple service, a task which is supremely welcome to this goddess whom you (i.e. Klea) worship as one who is exceptionally wise and devoted to wisdom (ἐξαιρέτως σοφὴν καὶ φιλόσοφον οὖσαν). Her name certainly seems to imply that to her more than anyone else belong knowledge and understanding (τὸ εἰδέναι καὶ τὴν ἐπιστήμην προσήκουσαν).[558]

The world of ordinary experience naturally erodes this vision; *Met.* 11.21–30 remains for us a precious insight into the institutionalised offer of Isiac mystery.

One last point perhaps needs to be made. It has been claimed that the initiation led directly to one's admission as a priest; however, Lucius' account shows plainly that this is mistaken.[559] We only have to look at the beginning of *Met.* 11.17 to see that there was a clear distinction

[558] *De Iside* 2, 351e–352a with Griffiths ad loc.; the implied etymology is via forms such as ἴσμεν and εἴσομαι back to οἶδα; on the analogy between Philo's Sophia and Plutarch's Isis (as εἴδησις and φρόνησις) see Dillon 1977, 204–6.

[559] E.g. F. Jung, Isis und die ägyptischen Mysterien, in W. Westendorf (ed.), *Aspekte der spät-ägyptischen Religion* (Wiesbaden 1979) 3–115. Even Malaise, who ought to know better, claims that initiates were 'ordinary priests' (1986b, 355).

between initiates and priests. The passage lists three different classes (or individuals) who enter the temple after the end of the *Isidis navigium* procession: *sacerdos maximus, quique divinas effigies progerebant, et qui venerandis penetralibus pridem fuerint initiati, intra cubiculum deae recepti*....[560] No doubt initiation was a preliminary to, presumably indeed a necessary condition of, priesthood, but it did not lead directly to it. Most initiates, it seems, remained outside the priesthood, although they maintained close relations with the community as a whole. What they desired, at any rate according to Lucius, was to pass their lives in the goddess' service as her *famuli* rather than be elevated to the rank of priest.[561] It also seems that initiates were encouraged, or privileged, to wear their robes of initiation on special occasions, which must have served to differentiate them from priests.[562]

5. Cultic Practice in Mithraism

> Es ist mir nicht darum zu thun, einer der hier vorgetragenen Meynungen weiter zu behaupten, als sie sich von selbst behaupten. Und ich gebe meine Vermuthungen für nichts anderes als was sie sind.
>
> G. Zoega, *Ueber die den Dienst des Mithras betreffenden römischen Kunstdenkmäler* (1798–9) p. 209 (ed. F. Welcker, 1817)

The lack of reliable literary sources makes it almost impossible to reconstruct Mithraic rituals with any confidence. As a result most of what one reads on this topic is speculation based on poor gleanings from the epigraphy, the iconography of the monuments, and the hostile reports of Christian writers, which are to be taken *a priori* as distortions at best, if not outright fabrications. Moreover, the cult's strict confinement to the group—there were no public processions, no attempt at

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[560] "The chief priest, those who had carried the divine images, and those who had already been initiated into the awesome inner sanctuary, were admitted into the goddess's private chamber..." (tr. J.A. Hanson). It is however somewhat baffling to find that the *pastophori*, who certainly included some who had been initiated (if indeed they were not all initiates), are only summoned afterwards to the door of the *penetralia*.

[561] 11.27; cf. Malaise 1985.

[562] One of the arguments of the apparition that appears to Lucius before his third initiation is that he has no Isiac robe (*exuviae deae*) to wear at Rome (11.29). Quite how this squares with Lucius' later appointment as a *pastophorus*, *ne sacris suis gregi cetero permixtus deservirem* (11.30) is not made clear. Perhaps the special robes—assuming they are not completely imaginary—were only rarely worn.

public self-representation—together with the rule of silence meant that little information was generally available; and the outside world in return showed very little interest in its doings, so that there is far less casual reference to Mithraic ritual practices than is the case with Mater Magna and Isis. Nothing whatever for example is known about the calendar of ritual events.[563] On the other hand, the information provided by archaeology, both in terms of its variety and its quality, is much greater than in the case of the other two. In this section I pay far more attention to it than to the literary sources. This is all the more reasonable in that archaeologists have contributed a great deal recently to undermining some old assumptions about the cult. It is hardly necessary to warn that, in the absence of a written script, even a fictional one like Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, with its own complex agenda, opinions among scholars about Mithraic ritual have varied widely, a situation that archaeological discoveries actually exacerbate.

As I explained in Chapter 2, since the debates of the 1970s few scholars now subscribe to the views of Franz Cumont, though they are still to be found repeated in exhibition- and sales-catalogues, popular histories and other contexts that perpetuate *idées mortes*. These ideas however mainly referred to the level of myth and the question of origins. Even Cumont did not claim that Mithraic ritual could be explained by appealing to Iranian sources.[564] Here the appropriate interpretative context must be Graeco-Roman culture. The main proviso, as in my previous analyses, is that we should not over-generalise on the basis of individual items of information: the basic rule is that rituals are subject to perpetual change as they adapt to local conditions, and with the passing of time. Theory here is however easier than practice: given the state of the evidence, it is rarely possible to trace specific changes. The next-best alternative is to offer the most coherent explanations that we can.

It seems likely that one major contrast with the other two cults—one thinks of the March festival, or the *Isidis navigium*—was that there were no occasional participants or casual spectators in the cult of Mithras. The usual path of recruitment—we may assume that many were

[563] Cf. Beck 1984, 2040f.; 2000, 145 n. 2. I cannot accept any of the dates proposed by Merkelbach 1984, 141–5.

[564] Unlike Campbell 1968. No later Iranists have attempted interpretations of specific Mithraic rituals in the light of Iranian texts: the appeal is always to general considerations.

attracted to the cult of Isis, say, through witnessing a procession—was thus unavailable. Insofar as there were Mithraic processions, they were not held in public but took place within the temple itself. I say 'insofar', since the evidence is ambiguous.[565] The chief item is the layers of paintings on either side of the S. Prisca mithraeum on the Aventine. These depict two, or even three, different types: on the upper layer of the shorter left wall a group of *Leones*, each man named, is depicted approaching a cave where Mithras and Sol, both with haloes, are reclining; on the opposite (east) wall, and in the inverse sequence (i.e. proceeding *away* from the cult niche), representative members of six grades, *Corax* to *Heliodromus*, each under the protection of a named planet, approach the *Pater*, who sits on a throne facing them, raising his hand in acknowledgement of their duty.[566] Further along the same wall, towards the entrance of the mithraeum, is a sequence showing five named *Leones* leading or carrying sacrificial offerings, the largest of them a white bull and a boar, and a metonymic reference to feasting (a large krater, to connote the drinking of wine at the communal meal). This sequence proceeds in the opposite direction to the grade-sequence, i.e. towards the cult-niche (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965, 160–2). Vermaseren implausibly identified it as a 'suovetaurilia'.

Quite what we are to make of these is unclear. Since the primary intention seems to be to memorialise the named donors, and to say something about hierarchy in the cult, we may legitimately assume a synoptic rather than a naturalistic view, i.e. the paintings tell us not what was to be seen, but what needed to be told, explained, affirmed or celebrated.[567] This is most clearly evident in the fact that the 'procession' on the left (shorter) wall leads up not to a naturalistic end-point, e.g. a *Pater*, but to the divine pair, Mithras and Sol, whom no one will claim to have really (or even 'really') been present. But it seems to me

[565] Cf. Turcan 1978, much to be preferred to the superficial essay of J. Stewardson and E. Saunders, Reflections on the Mithraic Liturgy, in Laeuchli 1967, 67–84.

[566] Vermaseren and van Essen 1965, 148–50; 155–8; there were similar paintings on the layer below, ibid. 165f.; on this layer the *Leones* were also depicted on the right-hand wall, beneath the later 'suovetaurilia' (166f.).

[567] Cf. Elsner's point about the cult-relief itself: "Whatever the initiates actually did in a mithraeum (which no analysis of Mithraic art or Zoroastrian texts will ever tell us), the tauroctone represents not them but their god…What this icon represents is nothing that could ever have happened in any mithraeum *except symbolically* [Elsner's emphasis]. Even if sacrifice did take place, and even if a real bull were killed, no real scorpion, serpent or dog could have acted as the ones represented in the image do" (1995, 212).

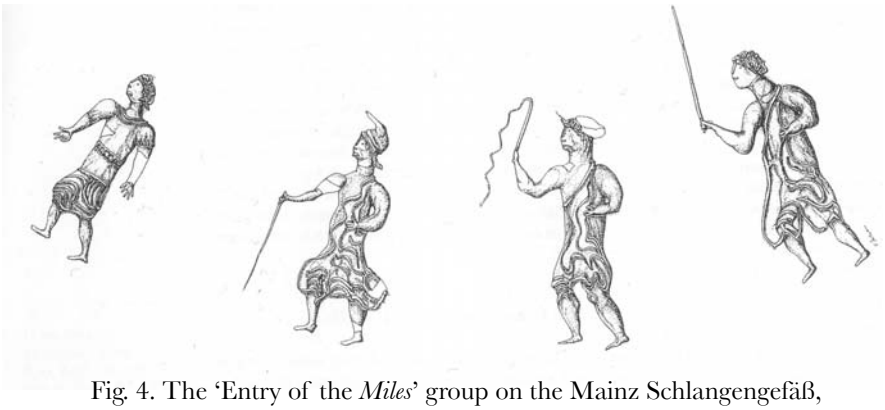

Fig. 4. The 'Entry of the *Miles*' group on the Mainz Schlangengefäß, c. AD 120–40.

equally to be the case in the 'suovetaurilia': it is surely obvious that we have a sequence of representative sacrificial animals (all male) together with wine, i.e. a metonymy for the Mithraic banquet. The animals are purely *exempli gratia*, but the grandest of their kind.[568] Will someone on this evidence claim that the Mithraists squeezed bulls, rams, full-grown boars, into their temples rather than assorted piglets and chickens?[569] Similarly, I would argue, the 'procession' of grades describes not what could ever be seen, at S. Prisca or anywhere else, but notes their role, and, less specifically, the fundamental place of hierarchy in the economy of the cult (Gordon 2007, 398f., 402f.).

The now well-known Schlangengefäß from the never-excavated mithraeum beneath the Ballplatz in Mainz is a slightly different matter. One face depicts in barbotine technique what seems to be a procession, moving to the left (Text-fig. 4).[570] First comes a small figure wearing a

[568] Bourdieu's account of the ordinary vs the extra-ordinary (the gap between actual Kybele weddings and the ideal wedding) is apposite here (1977, 52–6).

[569] Popular accounts, which often muddle the tauroctony with the Metroac taurobolium, sometimes assume that bulls were killed in mithraea. This is patently absurd, though, if I understand him aright, Turcan did once toy with the idea (1981b, 344f.) and Martens can write of the cult niche at Tienen that it is "where the bull-killing should be situated" (2004a, 28).

[570] First published by Horn 1994; R. Merkelbach immediately offered an alternative view: Das Mainzer Mithrasgefäß, *ZPE* 108 (1995) 1–6. I have mainly used Beck 2000, 154–67 = 2004a, 66–77; also 2006, 76. I. Huld-Zetsche is about to publish a full account of the mithraeum, the vessel and the finds, insofar as they can still be located.

cuirass, evidently a *Miles*; then, on a larger scale, a *Pater*, striding along in a stately manner, with a staff or walking stick. He is followed by an equally large figure wearing a solar crown and brandishing a whip, evidently a *Heliodromus*. Both of these figures wear beards. The last figure, the same size as two preceding ones (i.e. larger than the *Miles*), is a young man carrying a walking stick erect in the air.

Earlier interpretations saw these four figures, together with the three on the other face, as representations of the seven grades, i.e. as strictly parallel to the sequence on the east wall at S. Prisca. In order to do this, however, there had to be a good deal of tucking and pulling: since there is clearly a *Pater* on the other face, the figure I see as *Pater* had to become a *Perses*.[571] Beck however has ingeniously identified the group as a 'Procession of the Sun-Runner', a mimesis of the sun's annual journey through the heavens, as a validation of the mithraeum's function as an image of the universe and as a representation of the destiny of souls.[572] More recently, he has suggested that it might be an equinoctial ritual celebrated on the two appropriate days of the year: the *Heliodromus*, as representative of the Sun, may have been thought to reproduce Mithras' movement in the cosmos.[573] In either case, we would have a genuine procession, down and then back up the central aisle of the mithraeum. This argument, however, means that he has to identify the second figure, in whom I see a large and impressive *Pater*, as a sort of Cautopates (because he holds his staff downwards) and the last figure, who is of course completely different in wearing no distinctive clothing, as a sort of Cautes (because he holds his stick *up*). The fact that the first figure wears a cuirass is on this view completely insignificant—he becomes 'an attendant'.

All of this seems to me quite implausible, indeed the predictable result of interpreting archaeological evidence in the light of an *a priori* theory. In my view, it is more satisfactory to identify these figures, so far as possible, in the light of other representations of the grades, and to base one's interpretation on the results. On that basis, this face of the Schlangengefäß represents a *Pater* and a *Heliodromus*, namely representatives of the two highest grades, endorsing the promotion of a

[571] See the chart in Beck 2000, 155.

[572] A δρόμος is technically an arc of a planet's actual orbit.

[573] Beck 2006, 128ff. I do not pretend to understand much of the argument about biogenetic structuralism and 'neurotheology' that follows.

worshipper to the inferior grade *Miles*, followed by a mystagogue, i.e. the man responsible for accompanying and protecting the initiate.[574] At the same time, the pairing of *Pater* and *Heliodromus* evokes the pairing of Mithras and Sol at their banquet, just as, at S. Prisca, Mithras and Sol also represented, or evoked, these two grades.[575] Once again, it may be preferable in the case of the Mainz vessel to assume a synoptic rather than a naturalistic representation.

However that may be, we have no reason to suppose that Mithraic rituals were divided into an exoteric and an esoteric group. In the absence of fuller documentation, we have to assume that these rituals were all esoteric and all took place within the temple, which was itself constructed so as to evoke the cave in which Mithras killed the primal bull. This central fact makes the mithraeum quite exceptional among pagan temples: for all their idiosyncrasies, those of Mater Magna and Isis conformed far more closely to the general Graeco-Roman model.

a. *The Ritual Function of the Mithraeum*

The 'interiorisation' of Mithraic ritual was thus distinctive. The ceremonial focus of the cult was the enclosed *cella* of the mithraeum (see Pl. 25), whose symbolic value contrasts sharply with that of the temples and other sacred buildings of Roman official cult, that of the oriental cults with a significant public dimension, and that of Jewish synagogues

[574] In my view, the fact that the *Miles* leads the 'procession' strongly suggests that the pot was commissioned by a man who was being initiated into this grade (it had evidently been deliberately put out of service at some later date: Huld-Zetsche 2004, 216f.; 222f.). Given the expense of barbotine technique, he was either fairly prosperous, or himself a potter. The idea that the pot as a whole celebrates the initiation of a *Miles* would fit with the military associations of the scene on the other face (where a *Pater* is aiming a bow at a terrified initiand). Spickermann 2007, 131 prefers the older interpretation of Horn, arguing that the 'acolyte' is the focus, i.e. a man being initiated as a *Corax*.

[575] "It is no mere coincidence that the Pater and Heliodromus—particularly the latter on the right side-wall—should bear a detailed resemblance to their divine exemplars" (Vermaseren and van Essen 1965, 152). This interpretation implies the existence of a parallelism between the two faces of the Schlangengefäß: apart from the dominant sense in each case, this scene evokes the banquet of Mithras and Sol; that on the other, the 'water-miracle'. Huld-Zetsche has recently shown that the hitherto-accepted restoration of the Schlangengefäß is slightly inaccurate. In addition to the snake on the rim, there was also a raven (2004, 216–9 with figs. 10 and 11a–e).

and Christian churches.[576] This symbolism explains the distinctive shape and lay-out of the mithraeum, whose cosmic and mythic rationale has been compared to that of the Hindu temple.[577] As is well known, although relatively few mithraea are actually in true caves (such as the recently-discovered double mithraea at Doliche/Dülük in Commagene), they were often built to recall a cave, either by constructing the *cella* up against a natural rock-face into which the tauroctony was carved, or by using artificial means, such as pumice, to imitate a natural cave.[578] The intention was to recall the location of Mithras' heroic bull-killing. This mythic cave was itself however a figure for the vault of heaven and its constituent parts, as Porphyry explicitly tells us,[579] and as the decoration of some mithraea confirms, either by means of stars painted on the ceiling, as at S. Maria Capua Vetere, of stereotyped planetary orbits, as in the mithraeum of the Seven Spheres at Ostia, or by constructing *loculi* for the twelve signs of the zodiac and (perhaps) six of the seven planets, as at Vulci, Etruria.[580] In principle, therefore, the layout and furnishings of a mithraeum were supposed to refer to a mythical and a cosmic space, so that the attention of the worshippers was constantly drawn to this 'real' reference. This aspect of the temple

[576] J.W. Stambaugh, The Functions of Roman Temples, ANRW II.16.1 (1984) 554–604; L.M. White, *Building God's House in the Roman World: Architectural Adaptations among Pagans, Jews and Christians* (Baltimore and London 1989); Stamper 2005; Wild 1984.

[577] "Hindu temples are miniature universes, usually square and mapped out according to a *yantra*, a sacred diagram, to act as an image of the world. In the Greek and Roman cultures, to my knowledge, such microcosmic temples occur only in the cult of Mithras, where the temple is called the Cave and represents the world": Dowden 2000, 128.

[578] Turcan 2000, 74–8; Clauss 2000, 42–8; more fully: Beck 2006, 102–12. On the cave-mithraea at Doliche, see Schütte-Maischatz in eadem and Winter 2004, 79–156, who also provides a useful but rather uncritical list of true cave-mithraea (pp. 127–9), to which one may add at least the cave at Tor Cervara on the outskirts of Rome (E. Lissi Caronna, Un rilievo mitriaco di marmo, Boll. d'Arte 5 (1965) 91–4 at 93 n. 1), and the late mithraeum found at Aigio in Achaea (E.-I. Kolia, Eine Kultgrotte des Mithras in Aigion, *MDAI(A)* 118 (2003) 397–427 at 397–417). A good example of a mithraeum built against a rock into which the relief was carved is that at Reichweiler in Baden-Württemberg (V.1280): Hensen 2000, 94 with fig. 1.

[579] αὐτοφυὲς σπήλαιον … εἰκόνα … τοῦ κόσμου, ὃν ὁ Μίθρας ἐδημιούργησε, τῶν δ' ἐντὸς κατὰ συμμέτρους ἀποστάσεις σύμβολα φερόντων τῶν κοσμικῶν στοιχείων καὶ κλιμάτων … : *De antro* 6.

[580] Capua: Vermaseren 1971, 3; Seven Spheres: Gordon 1988, 53; Vulci: A.M. Sgubini Moretti, Nota preliminare su un mitreo scoperto a Vulci, in Bianchi 1979, 259–76 with excellent drawings; Gordon 1988, 54 fig. 2.

has been explored with great ingenuity (if not always convincingly) by Roger Beck and I do not need to enlarge on it here.[581]

As an architectonic space, the mithraeum combined three features kept separate in the conventional Graeco-Roman temple-complexes. It housed the cult-statue, or rather, as Ernest Will so well showed, the cult-relief, with its implicit narrative, so typical of new cults in the Empire; the altar(s), which were conventionally outside the temple, in the open air, directly opposite the main doors; and the dining-rooms, which were conventionally separate from the temple itself.[582] This 'functional condensation' largely explains the typical appearance of a mithraeum-*cella*, with its lateral podia, where the worshippers reclined for feasting, its central aisle to permit access to the podia and to the ritual area around the main relief, and its collection of votive altars and other cult-furniture in front of the relief (see Pl. 26).[583] In the provinces many mithraea, such as the recently-discovered example at Lugo in north-western Spain (Lucus Augusti, Tarraconensis), include kitchens for preparing food, and other service-rooms where the crockery and other requisites were kept.[584] At such sites, the bones of slaughtered animals, especially piglets and chickens, are commonly found;[585]

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[581] Beck 2000, 160–3; 2004a, 342–50; 2006, 102–18; cf. Gordon 1988, 53–7. Gordon however has recently suggested that some 15% of surviving reliefs may have been intended for individual worship or for small 'house churches': Gordon 2004, 263–7. Not all Mithraic worship took place in mithraea.

[582] E. Will, *Le relief cultuel gréco-romain* (Paris 1955); K. Moede, Reliefs, Public and Private, in Rüpke 2007d, 164–75. Examples of separate dining-rooms in mainland Greece, see Mylonopoulos 2006, 79f. and 103; on Samothrace: Cole 1984, 36f., 80, 118; the Italian collegium-buildings have been well studied by Bollmann 1998.

[583] Turcan 1991 provides a good account of altars in the cult, considered from various points of view. Much ink has been spilled over the silly question of whether bulls were sacrificed in mithraea, cf. Merkelbach 1984, 145.

[584] Feasting and apparitoria: Schatzmann 2004, 12–7; Lugo: J. Alvar, R. Gordon, C. Rodríguez, The *mithraeum* at Lugo (*Lucus Augusti*) and its connection with *Legio VII Gemina*, *JRA* 19 (2006) 266–77 (it has recently been realised that the word DEO appears on the altar baluster above the inscribed field, not noted in *AE* 2003: 949). The finest collection of crockery yet found is that from the mithraeum in the Üsenbergstraße, Riegel in the Kaiserstuhl: see B. Cämmerer, Riegel: Mithraeum, in P. Filtzinger, D. Planck and B. Cämmerer (eds.), *Die Römer in Baden-Württemberg*[3] (Stuttgart 1986) 506–8; Hensen 2000, 98–101; C. Dreier, Riegel am Kaiserstuhl, in Planck 2005, 273–8 at 276f. At Pons Aeni (Pfaffenhofen am Inn), the remains of wooden shelving, lockable cupboards and chests for storing the crockery have been found: Garbsch 1985, 364.

[585] Turcan 1991; an older example is the three pits full of bones found near the mithraeum at Sarmizegetusa (V.2027). Recent excavations have provided far more specific information about Mithraic eating-habits. Archaeo-zoological examination of some 27,000 bones found at the small mithraeum on the Danube at Quintana (Künzing) has shown that 50% were piglets killed at les than 6 months of age, 18%

sometimes indeed they were deliberately buried or disposed of in or near the temple.[586] It is however quite uncertain where these animals were sacrificed; some altars near the cult-relief certainly have burn-marks, and many mithraea have more or less elaborate drainage systems in this area, apparently inter alia to wash away blood. In Ostia and other Italian urban sites, however, kitchens are not common, since most mithraea occupied space in larger buildings, insulae, *horrea*, baths and other accessible buildings, and we must suppose that, as is attested by shopping-lists at Dura-Europus, roasted meat as well as wine, garum and bread were bought in from near-by *popinae*.[587] It is also interesting to note that that there is no Mithraic iconography of the sacrificing

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of the rest were chickens, and another 18% of sheep/goat: A. von den Driesch and N. Polläth, Tierknochen aus dem Mithras-Tempel von Künzing, Kr. Deggendorf, in K. Schmotz (ed.), *Vorträge des 18. Niederbayerischen Archäologentages* (Rahden, Westf. 2000) 145–62. Of the 10925 bones from the mithraeum at Martigny (Valais) identified as domestic, 5159 are those of pigs/piglets, mainly less than 1 year old, and 3388 those of chickens; only 1818 are sheep/goat, 515 (young) cattle, 25 horse, 17 dog; 18213 bones could not be specifically attributed; of those that were, 98% are of domestic animals; the preferred cuts of pig(lets) were the hams: C. Olive, La faune exhumée des *mithraea* de Martigny (Valais) et d'Orbe-Boscéaz (Vaud) en Suisse, in Martens and De Boe 2004, 147–55. Of the 13928 dry-sieved bones from the large pit at Tienen, of which many were unidentified, 7615 were of chickens/cocks, 314 sheep/goat, 278 pigs; all the latter were from very young animals: Lentacker, Ervynck and Van Neer 2004, 58–66. In the Crypta Balbi mithraeum in Rome, however, where the number of bones recovered was far smaller, 62.9% were of pig(let)s, only 19.5% of chickens: J. de Grossi Mazorin, I resti animali del mitreo della Crypta Balbi: testimonianze di pratiche cultuali, in Martens and De Boe 2004, 179–81.

[586] "Great quantities" of animal bones (including fish-bones) from banquets were found as infill under the plaster used to renew the cult niche in the Dura mithraeum, phase II: Rostovtzeff et al. 1939, 75. Similarly, numbers of bones were found in the podia of the mithraeum at Güglingen nr. Heilbronn: W. Joachim, Ein römisches Mithräum mit römischen und alamanischen Siedlungsreste in Güglingen, Kr. Heilbronn, *Archäologische Ausgrabungen in Baden-Württenberg* 1999 (Stuttgart 2000) 139–43. At Wiesloch nr. Heidelberg a large pit had been filled with bones and other rubbish 6m away from the mithraeum: Hensen 2000, 107. The bones at Künzing had been deliberately buried near the mithraeum, but were found washed into it. Naïdenova has suggested that at Novae the animals may have been sacrificed somewhat away from the mithraeum: 1994, 227.

[587] See V. 64, 65, Kane 1975, 350. These are the only two lists that have been published; Rostovtzeff 1939, 124f. however speaks of "several" such account-lists. For the situation at Ostia, see Bakker 1994, 113f., stressing that there seems nevertheless to have been some desire to avoid much-frequented streets and thoroughfares. On kitchens, Schatzmann has drawn attention to the curious structures in one of the side-rooms of the S. Prisca mithraeum on the Aventine, where many chicken bones were found (2004, 20f.). These structures do not however seem to have belonged to an oven or cooking-range. In city-mithraea, especially if they were below ground-level, smoke from cooking-fires must have made it difficult to use kitchens for roasting meat.

Pater, sacerdos or whoever: this absence of course does not tell us that the cult was not sacrificial, simply that the 'true' sacrificer was held to be Mithras. In this regard, the cult picked up, mythologised and 'cosmogonised' the well-known Archaic and Classical trope of 'spendende Götter'.[588] The supposed suovetaurilia-procession at S. Prisca, mentioned above, is directed towards Mithras and Sol as banqueters. These details suggest a degree of originality in the cult of Mithras by comparison with my other two oriental cults.[589]

The recent interest in Mithraic 'small finds', which in the past were almost always ignored or even thrown away, has reminded us of the value of archaeological evidence in illuminating questions of ritual practice. The taphonomic evidence from recent excavations has provided detailed evidence of the central importance of group feasting in the cult. This in turn has led to renewed awareness of the role of the lateral podia as affording space for diners to recline (presumably in such a way that they could keep the cult-relief in view). The most revealing iconographic evidence of this kind is a relief from a private house at Emerita (Pl. 27), which shows three figures reclining on their right elbows on a semi-circular platform. Between them is a table, from which one is taking food. On either side is an erect figure, an attendant of some kind; while from the left there enters a servant carrying a tray on which there seems to be a bull's head.[590] Up to a point, Mithraic groups can be seen as just one of numerous *collegia* and small,

[588] It will be enough to refer to N. Himmelmann's 1959 essay of that title repr. in his *Minima Archaeologica* (Mainz 1996) 54–61: "Die Vorbildlichkeit, Urbildlichkeit der Götter, die überhaupt eine Grundlage der olympischen Religion ist, gilt also auch wörtlich für den Bereich der heiligen Handlungen" (p. 59f.).

[589] As I have already mentioned (Chap. 2.1.c n. 244), Burkert repeatedly emphasises the originality and uniqueness of Mithraism vis-à-vis the other mysteries, e.g. 1987, 41–3; 84; 98f.

[590] V. 782. Strangely enough, Garcia y Bellido 1967 omits all discussion of the piece, yet the presence of a Mithras petragenes on the extreme left surely guarantees its Mithraic character. Despite the absence of the dead bull, the Mithraic character of this relief seems beyond doubt, cf. Turcan 2000, 68; Alvar 1993d, 791 n. 2. The circular platform on which the figures recline is evidently a synoptic view; there are several analogies in representations of banquets on late third- and fourth cent. sarcophagus-lids, e.g. the fragmentary example in the Ashmolean, inv. Pusey Memorial Fund 65.4; or the 'picnic' lid in the Vatican, reprod. in Zanker and Ewald 2004, 258 fig. 229; on a Bacchic lid in the Museo Naz. Romano [= *ASR* 1.4, pl. 11.1]: Turcan 2003, fig. 79. The closest parallel to the Emerita relief is a fragment of a sandstone relief from Mithraeum I at Stockstadt (V.1175) that shows six bearded men reclining on a long support spread with a coverlet of cloth or leather; although some are conversing, all the torsos are facing in the same direction (cf. Kane 1975, 350 n. 188).

exclusively religious associations (which did not need to be registered as *collegia*), and cults organised within large (slave-)households, whose concern with collective or communal dining has been documented for Rome and Ostia by Ulrike Egelhaaf-Gaiser (2000).[591]

The good cheer of Mithraic meals does not however mean that they lacked all religious motivation. For it is equally clear that such meals were referred directly back to the mythic feast of Mithras and Sol after the sacrifice of the bull, which thus took on the character of a classic Malinowskian charter.[592] Numerous detailed representations, which are a feature of the cult especially in the Germanies, show Mithras and Sol reclining at a table which is sometimes the dead bull itself—rather illogically, since the bull was supposed already to have been butchered by this time; but we have already learned to appreciate the role of synoptic views in the iconography of the cult—but more often, as at Konjic (Pl. 15), a table over which the flayed hide has been spread.[593]

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[591] These relatively lavish meals have nothing to do with the initiatory ritual cited by Justin Martyr as a parody of the Christian eucharist, which involved the presentation simply of bread and water accompanied by the utterance of certain formulae: ὅτι γὰρ ἄρτος καὶ ποτήριον ὕδατος τίθεται ἐν ταῖς τοῦ μυομένου τελεταῖς μετ' ἐπιλόγων τινῶν, ἢ ἐπίστασθε, ἢ μαθεῖν δύνασθε (*I Apol.* 66.4 = Sanzi 2003, 411: Mithras no. 3.1). Justin refers to the mysteries of Mithras and the Christian eucharist immediately prior to this citation (Clauss 2000, 108). The difference between this ritual and the usual festive meals was clearly established by Kane 1975, 350, who remarks: "Even the early Christians, who belonged to the 'misanthropic' Jewish tradition, began to combine a common meal, to which people brought their own contributions, with the eucharistic celebration". No doubt influenced by this, Clauss suggests that "the ritual meals were probably simply a component of regular common meals" (2000, 113). As so often, there is no means of reconciling the difference between the archaeology and the literary report. The archaeology seems to me the more reliable index: the focus of Mithraic meetings was the common meal. It is possible that Justin is referring to a local ritual, or to the initiation of a single grade, e.g. the *Corax*. In the *Corax* frame at the mitreo di Felicissimo, for example, there appears a small drinking-beaker (Floriani Squarciapino 1962, 53).

[592] Cf. F. Graf, *Griechische Mythologie* (Munich and Zurich 1985) 46; Csapo 2005, 140–5.

[593] Kane 1975, 318 n. 14; Turcan 2000, 60f.; Clauss 2000, 108–13. The cult-relief from Heddernheim I (V. 1083) is the best example of the bull's corpse providing the table. The well-known relief from Lopodunum/Ladenburg that B. Heukemes always intended to publish with a commentary, now in the Lobdengaumuseum (e.g. Schwertheim 1974, 188f. no. 144; Hinnells 1975b, 2 pl. 11a; R. Wiegels, *Lopodunum II: Inschriften und Kultdenkmäler aus dem römischen Ladenburg am Necker* (Stuttgart 2000) 125f. no. G21 with fig. 79 and colour frontispiece (painted copy); Planck 2005, 165 with colour photo) implies that there was, or might be, an entire story about this first sacrifice: it shows the table at which Mithras and Sol are eating, usually represented as a portable table of the type familar from East-Aegean *Totenmahlreliefs*, as a rough stool whose legs are formed from the bull's lower legs.

Smaller, sometimes extremely schematic, representations of the same scene abound elsewhere (e.g. Pl. 6, right pilaster, bottom scene; Pl. 11, bottom right), especially as a bye-scene on Danubian-style reliefs. The central importance of this mythic banquet for Mithraic ritual praxis is made clear by the existence in the Germanies, in the Balkans, and once or twice in Italy (e.g. V. 641, Fiano Romano) of reversible cult-reliefs, which carry the usual tauroctony on the obverse and the mythic banquet on the reverse (Pl. 15). The most elaborate examples were fitted top and bottom with heavy-duty wooden dowels which slotted into corresponding holes in the frame, so that the reverse could be revealed during the course of a ritual.[594]

It has been supposed that these facts indicate that Mithraic meals were in a strong sense sacramental.[595] I would say rather that Mithras' slaughter of the bull, the subsequent butchery of the carcass, the grilling of the 'noble' innards over the altar fire, and the boiling of the remainder of the meat by Cautes and Cautopates (Pl. 11, bottom left), rehearse a foundational narrative of 'the first sacrifice' that provides a model, much like Hesiod's far more famous one, of the rationale of sacrifice as a communicative institution.[596] By implication the commensality of Mithraists gains its rationale directly from the commensality of the gods. This latter idea is supported, for example, by the 'suovetaurilia' at S. Prisca, where, as I have already pointed out, the animals: bull, ram, boar, cockerel, represent ideal sacrificial animals to be eaten at the common meal, and the krater, the wine there drunk.[597] But the fact that they are being brought not to actual people, not even to the

[594] A list in Merkelbach 1984, 132 n. 20.

[595] Merkelbach 1984, 132f., citing Tertullian, *De praescr. haer.* 40.4 = Sanzi 2003, 414: Mithras no. 5.2: *(Diabolus) celebrat et panis oblationem et imaginem resurrectionis inducit.*

[596] The crucial iconographic evidence is the altar of Flavius Aper from Mithraeum III at Poetovio: V.1584 = Selem 1980, 130f. no. 91 (Pl. 19); cf. Gordon 1980, 62f. It is worth noting that this scene, where Sol and Mithras together roast the 'noble' *exta* over the altar-flame, in order then to eat them, presupposes the *Greek* rule for this type of meat. The Roman rule, as I have pointed out, was that the 'noble' *exta* of cattle were boiled, of pigs and sheep, roasted, and then put directly on the fire to be consumed by the flames and thus transmitted to the gods (Wissowa 1912, 418; J. Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion* [Edinburgh 2003] 84; Rüpke 2007a, 142). As gods themselves, Mithras and Sol could not obey this rule. On the scene of Cautes and Cautopates boiling the meat in a cauldron, see De Jong 1997, 56f. with fig. 2.

[597] As we have seen, the cockerel alludes to actual or typical offerings, the others to notional or desirable ones.

Pater and *Heliodromus* in their masquerade mode, but to Mithras and Sol shows that this is simply another way of asserting the point made by the reversible cult-reliefs.

Elsewhere, this divine-human link is asserted in a different iconographic convention. There are three cases in all. Two are fresco-panels, showing a feast attended by several persons, that are located *above*, and by implication *after*, the scene in which Mithras enters the chariot of Sol and is carried up to heaven.[598] They therefore imply a heavenly banquet that takes place after Mithras has quit the earth (if that is how the sequence is to be understood). In the case of the panel at Aquincum, Orsolya Madarassy thought she could make out a caduceus beside the figure on the extreme right, which would, if correct, clinch the argument.[599] The third item is one of the panels on the base of the well-known 'weekday' tauroctony at Bologna, where, instead of the usual pair (Mithras and Sol), there are clearly three figures reclining at the table, two of whom seem to be wearing solar crowns (V.693). Alongside them is what must be an allusion to the scene of Mithras' ascent, but in the curious form of a winged putto driving a conch drawn by two tritons, with Oceanus reclining to the extreme right. If so, we would have various ways of connoting the same idea, that Mithraists celebrate their banquets against the model supplied first by Mithras and Sol, and then by the gods. This intimate relation between 'far back then', 'up there', 'down here' is perfectly conveyed by the figures of men with ravens' heads who sometimes serve the food at the banquet of Mithras and Sol in place of the torchbearers (Pl. 15). The banquet here is a mythical event celebrated by gods at which human beings in their capacity as *Coraces* participate as waiters, just as they did at real Mithraic common meals in each mithraeum.[600]

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[598] One is in the Barberini mithraeum in Rome, V.390 R5; Annibaldi thought he could make out 3 people reclining; the photos seem to show up to five. The other is in the recently-discovered mithraeum in the House of the *tribuni laticlavii* in the castra of leg. II Adiutrix at Aquincum: Madarassy 1991, 210 with fig. 3 (her Panel 11). In both cases the scene is right at the top of the right-hand 'pilaster', at Aquincum indeed well above the tauroctony.

[599] Madarassy also though she could make out a youthful but bearded figure (Jupiter? Mars?). In the text, she inclines towards an assembly of the planets; in the caption to fig. 3 (see preceding note) a 'Mysterium-Szene'. The idea of a heavenly banquet in this context might lend further point to the occasional representation, as at Osterburken (Pl. 17 here), of assemblies of the gods on compound reliefs.

[600] A good account, evidently by Cumont, in Rostovtzeff et al. 1939, 107–10; Cumont 1975, 176–81.

The mithraeum's role as a place where communal meals could be eaten seems to have restricted its desirable size. The cult preferred small groups, and during its period of expansion shows a clear tendency in towns and cities to multiply the number of temples rather than to expand the size of an existing one (in *vici* however, where the number of potential members was restricted, there are many examples of enlargement). Thus in Rome the existence of at least 40 mithraea can be confidently established on the basis of the surviving archaeological and epigraphic evidence. If the density were anything like that in Ostia, there might have been up to 2,000; rejecting this thought, Coarelli suggests that there may have been anything up to 700, i.e. one for every two inhabited hectares.[601] In the light of both earlier exploration and the Fascist excavations, Bakker reckons that we can speak with some assurance of sixteen mithraea at Ostia (1994, 111f., 114 n. 28).[602] Using Coarelli's rule of thumb, that would give us around 40 for the entire city (Coarelli 1979, 77); Bakker reckons the figure was more like 24 (1994, 114). Of the excavated cases, six were built in the Antonine period (Antoninus Pius—Commodus), 5 more c. 190–218, 4 in the first half of the third century. Allowing very little room per person (50cm per man), Bakker estimates that these temples could hold between c. 28 (Caseggiata di Diana; Sette Porte) and c. 45 ('Sabazeo'), which I believe to be a considerable exaggeration, although it must be admitted that we have no idea whether the idea was that all the members of a Mithraic group should meet together, or only those in the same grade.[603] There is however one now famous case dated

[601] F. Coarelli, Topografia mitriaca di Roma, in Bianchi 1979, 69–79; the list of probable mithraea is pp. 70–5; the hypotheses on p. 77; a more user-friendly version of his map will be found in Beard, North and Price 1998, xx–xxi, Map 3. Griffith 1993 succeeds in whittling Coarelli's figure down to 14 definite cases. We may well think this a case of Pyrrhonism, since no one doubts that, broadly speaking, in Italy a relief implies a mithraeum, and over 70 are recorded firmly or probably for Rome.

[602] His totals vary, however; both on p. 111f. and 115 he gives 17; at p. 114 n. 28 he corrects Coarelli by giving 16. He counts mitreo 'Fagan' as mitreo del Palazzo Imperiale II, and mitreo 'Petrini' as probably identical to Sette Sfere. I am inclined to doubt this; on the other hand, I see no good reason, except for its ground-plan, to believe the 'Sabazeo' was a mithraeum (none of the inscriptions clearly suggests such an identification), so I also arrive at a figure of 16. Becatti 1954, 69–75 hesitantly suggested that the Sacello delle tre Navate (Reg. III, Is. II,2) might also be a mithraeum, only to reject the idea; and everyone agrees with him.

[603] A. Hensen, Das Mithräum im Vicus von Wiesloch, *Archäologische Nachrichten aus Baden* 51/52 (1994) 30–7 at 36 uses the estimate of 1.4m² per man, and implies that we need to consider not merely the length but also the width of the podia, which I consider far more reasonable.

c. AD 250–70, at Tienen/Tirlemont in Belgica/Belgium, where it can be shown that at least 100 people, and doubtless rather more, celebrated a feast on the patch of land belonging to the mithraeum of the *vicus*, then smashed all the crockery they had used, including incense-burners, plates, cooking-pots and cups, and threw them, with the food-remains, into a large, specially-dug, rubbish-pit.[604] There can evidently be no question of all these people crowding into the mithraeum, which measured just 12 × 3.5m. But the incident does suggest that the size of Mithraic temples might have no direct relation to the size of the association as a whole; unless we suppose that that this was just a party to which the Mithraic association invited friends and relations, or Mithraists from other nearby temples.

There were however some much larger mithraea. The largest yet discovered was found recently in the Roman villa-complex of Els Munts, on the Costa Dorada some 12 km north of Tarragona (Tarraco), which forms part of the Museo Nacional Arqueológico de Tarragona, and may have been a summer residence of the provincial governor.[605] The length of the cella of the 'Ballplatz' mithraeum in Mainz, destroyed without excavation in 1976, has also been estimated at c. 30m long, though this is frankly a guess.[606] Until these discoveries, the largest known mithraea were the temple at Sárkeszi in Pannonia Inf. (23 × 10m), that beneath the Baths of Caracalla in Rome (23m × 9.70m = 223m^2), and Mithraeum III at Carnuntum (23 × 8.50m).[607] Another indication of the existence of large mithraea is a most unusual find made by archaeologists of the Landesmuseum für Kärnten in the Zollfeld north of

[604] Martens 2004a, 30–45; 2004b, 344–8. The custom of smashing and burying objects used in religious ceremonies is widespread in the Gauls and Germanies. Its use in a Mithraic context suggests the extent to which the cult had adapted to local traditions in Belgica.

[605] Excavated during the seasons 2004–5 by Francesc Tharrats and J.A. Remolà, aided by J. Ruiz de Arbulo. The villa was built in the first century AD, partly destroyed by fire around 275 (some other grand villas in the area, such as Casa del Mar and those beneath the Carrer Alguer in Tarragona, were given up at about the same time), but inhabited on a reduced scale until the seventh century AD. The cella alone of the mithraeum measures 30m × 8m (= 240m^2). Among the finds are a triangular altar and two uninscribed *arae*. Fragments of sculpture belonging to the temple had already been found in previous campaigns.

[606] I. Huld-Zetsche, Ein Mithraeum in Mainz, *Archäologie in Rheinland-Pfalz 2002* (Mainz 2003) 75–8.

[607] The temple at Sarmizegetusa used to be reckoned the largest (Kiraly estimated 26 × 12m), but this was based on extrapolation from German mithraea of similar plan. Only the cult-niche survives: most of the mithraeum could not be excavated.

Klagenfurt in 1992, namely the album of one of the major temples of Virunum (Noricum), which was inscribed on a large bronze plaque and evidently displayed in the mithraeum.[608] It provides a list of 98 names of members over a period of some twenty years. 34 of these are listed in the first one and one third columns as having contributed to the restoration of the mithraeum in AD 183. The remaining names, which do not seem to be subscribers, but simply members of the association, were added in subsequent years by the temple administrator(s) in a variety of different scripts: in 184 as many as 8 (evidently to compensate for five deaths in the preceding year), in others, such as AD 186, 190 194, 196 and 201, just one man.[609] Virunum also provides what seems to be our only direct evidence for the process of founding a new association from an existing one. For a second find in a different part of the Zollfeld, consisting of two fragments of an album on marble, contains a list in four columns that names twenty of the more recent members of the association, but in a different order from the bronze album.[610] Piccottini reasonably suggests that these men decided in AD 201 to found their own association.[611] One of the motives will have been to permit increased access to honorific positions such as the grade of *Pater* and to the sacrificial-administrative position of *sacerdos*.

Many of the men in the Virunum album bear *nomina* that associate them with the prominent or near-prominent families of the town: they were presumably freedmen (23% of the cognomina are Greek) or descendants of freedmen. This suggests a shared social background, with brothers, relatives and friends extending membership among their

[608] *AE* 1994: 1334, with the excellent account of Piccottini 1994. Although one might question Piccottini's conclusion that the names were only added once a year, it seems the most reasonable hypothesis.

[609] A *theta nigra* (θ) stands beside five names only, all of them in the group of the original 34 who paid for the restoration of the temple (see the chart in Piccottini 1994, facing p. 14). This seems very few deaths for a twenty-year period; even if we assume that most new members were young and healthy men, it must be the case that the *theta nigra* ceased to be recorded for those that joined after AD 184.

[610] *AE* 1994: 1335 = *ILLPRON* 15/16 and 748/773/774. See the drawing of the fragments in Piccottini 1994, facing p. 47, and the comparison on p. 47 between the locations of the names in the two different texts.

[611] The alternative would be that this is simply a later album containing the names of those still alive and active in AD 201/2 (it must date from between AD 198 and 209), but this hypothesis would not account for the different order of the names. However the situation is made much more problematic by the total loss both of col. i and the end of col. iv. So far as one can make out, all the names in the second list were inscribed in the same hand, i.e. on the basis of a single hand-written list.

own circles.[612] At Ostia we find a small number of minor dignitaries of the town among the Mithraic leaders (*patres*), though no one of the decurial class.[613] Uniquely, there seems to have been an at least informal group of senior Mithraists in the colony who knew one another and discussed common interests: at any rate, the combined *sacerdotes Solis Invicti Mithrae* subscribed to the manufacture of an honorific bronze plaque, with handles on the back for carrying, in honour of Sex. Pompeius Magnus, who was the president of one of the smaller professional associations of ferrymen, who took goods and passengers across the Tiber to Portus, *ob amorem et merita eius*.[614] Others evidently joined mithraea due to a certain social pressure: the fact that the Els Munts mithraeum was closely attached to a large villa suggests that the Mithraic congregation there was composed of members of the *familia* of the owner, slaves and freedmen, acting with permission. The same would apply to other mithraea found in the grounds of villas, such as the one at Orbe-Boscéaz (Canton Vaud, Switzerland) sites, and probably Can Modolell, near Matáro on the Costa del Maresme somewhat north of Barcelona.[615] Of older finds, the mithraeum at Marino in the Alban Hills was dedicated by the slave-*actor* of one Alfius Severus, who was

[612] The album includes four Celtic cognomina, and the names of just one peregrine (Calendinus Successi f.: col. iii.22), admitted in 195 with 6 other men, and one slave, Speratus (col. iv.17), admitted in 199 with 7 other men.

[613] Meiggs 1973, 372–4; Bakker 1994, 116f. M. Rainer, Die Mithrasverehrung in Ostia, *Klio* 66 (1984) 104–13 gives a rather over-optimistic impression of the cult's recruitment. The Mithraic *album* from Sentinum (*CIL* XI 5737 = *ILS* 4215 = V.688) provides a similar impression: Clauss 1992, 57.

[614] *CIL* XIV 403 = *ILS* 4213 = V.235. Pompeius' *collegium* does not occur in any other Ostian inscription, and seems shortly afterwards to have been absorbed into one of the larger shipping associations of the colony. This inscription describes him as one of the *sacerdotes* and a *pater patrum*, i.e. an occupant of the highest possible grade. He is also known from an earlier inscription to have been the *pater* responsible for the relatively lavish decoration of the mitreo Aldobrandini: *AE* 1924: 119 = *CIL* XIV 4314 = V.233. It must be admitted however that the *sacerdotes* do not specifically say they were from all the mithraea of the town; but in general there seems to have been only one *sacerdos* with that title at any one time. The bust on the front of the portable plaque is not of Mithras, but radiate Sol (see the good photo in Merkelbach 1984, 291 fig. 33, ignoring the commentary). The find-spot is unfortunately unknown: it formed part of the Castellani collection, and derived from clandestine digging at Ostia. The expression *semper habet* means that the plaque was given to him as a permanent mark of honour. After Pompeius' death it must have become part of the furniture of the mithraeum.

[615] Orbe-Boscéaz: T. Luginbühl, J. Monnier and Y. Mühlemann, Le *mithraeum* de la villa d'Orbe-Boscéaz (Suisse): du mobilier aux rites, in Martens and De Boe 2004, 109–109–33; Can Modolell: *AE* 1983: 628; 1992: 1096.

evidently the owner of the suburban estate.[616] The largest household mithraeum—or mithraea—must however have been that/those of the *domus Augustana* on the Palatine, which is/are attested by a tomb-stone erected vivens by the imperial freedman L. Septimius Archelaus for himself and his free-born wife, Cosia Primitiva.[617] Since the date of his manumission can be fixed within the period autumn 209–4 Feb. 211, the date is likely to be in the range AD 210–30 (though it might theoretically be somewhat later).

The commonest ceremonies regularly performed in mithraea were surely common meals, perhaps held once a month. Other observances are likely to have been attached to these occasions however. There may conceivably, for example, have been rituals commemorating specific markers of the solar year. The most likely candidate is the summer solstice. The clearest evidence in favour of this idea is the fact that the vault of the mithraeum at Caesarea Maritima was equipped with a scuttle that, according to tests run by the Joint Expedition, permitted a shaft of light to fall exactly on the altar at noon on the day of the solstice; the light also back-illuminated a large wood 'sun-burst' fitted up in the vault.[618] Roger Beck has suggested that the meeting of the Virunum Mithraists on 26 June AD 184 in order to commemorate the deaths of five of their members, including one of the two *Patres*, "warrant[s the] hypothesis that the Mithraists observed the season of the [summer] solstice as especially appropriate to the mortal condition", with a corresponding emphasis placed on the winter solstice, as the time when "immortality" was celebrated.[619] The main difficulty with this

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[616] This is the gist of the sole inscription: *AE* 1978: 72 = 1996: 328; cf. M.J. Vermaseren, *Mithriaca 3: The Mithraeum at Marino*. EPROER 16.3 (Leyden 1982) 5 (though Vermaseren does not lose a single word on the topic of the possible membership). The mithraeum occupied one of a range of vaulted *cryptoportici* for the storage, presumably, of wine.

[617] *CIL* VI 2771 = *ILS* 4270 = V.511. He describes himself as AUGGG LIB and *pater et sacerdos*. Two generations earlier, we know of a very senior member of the *domus Augustana* who was a worshipper of Mithras, namely M. Aurelius Carpus, *procurator kastrensis*: CIL VI 727 = V.510.

[618] R.J. Bull, The Mithraeum at Caesarea Maritima, in Duchesne-Guillemin 1978, 75–89 at 79; K.G. Holum et al., *King Herod's Dream: Caesarea on the Sea* (New York and London 1988) 150. They do not however say whether the tests included calculations of the position of the sun at the relevant moment in, say, AD 200. Some more careful investigation of these assumptions is perhaps in order.

[619] Beck 1998, 338–40 = 2004a, 358–60. The expression used in the inscription (*AE* 1994: 1334) has been inserted in smaller capitals beneath and to the right of the main heading: *et mortalitat(is) causa convener(unt)* (26 June 184). Piccottini suggests that the deaths were due to plague. As we saw above, the common idea, to which Beck

scenario is that, on the hypothesis Beck is following, the summer solstice would have been the time of the *entry* of souls into genesis, not their *exit*; Beck's formulation "especially appropriate to the mortal condition" is an obfuscation of the problem. There is in fact no direct evidence for a relation between souls and the solstices in the cult: the relevant passage of Porphyry, *De antro* 21 does not refer to Mithraists, but cites only the neo-Platonic commentators Numenius and his pupil Cronius.[620] Marleen Martens and her team have tried to argue that the age of the piglets and the lambs consumed at the celebration at Tienen suggests they were killed in midsummer, and so points to a celebration at or near the solstice, but this inference seems to be based on faulty assumptions about the seasons of pig-farrowing and lamb-births in antiquity.[621] And there is a notable dearth of other evidence; for example there is no clustering of votives around this time.[622] These may not, however, be fatal objections to the idea that the solstice(s) was (were) an important moment for Mithraists. We might also assume that there were specific rituals to commemorate the spring and autumn equinoxes, the "seats of Mithras", but again there is no evidence for them.

Another possible approach would be to ask whether initiations took place on specific days that were otherwise of importance. Sadly, however, there is only one group of inscriptions that relates to this question, of doubtful relevance to practice under the Principate. These are the precisely-dated altars and bases found in the fifteenth century somewhere beneath the former Palazzo Marignoli on the piazza S. Silvestro in Capite that record a series of Mithraic initiations conducted, mainly between AD 357 and 362, in their private or family temple by two

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also refers here, that the winter solstice was celebrated as Mithras' birthday, is quite baseless. Beck's point however is different.

[620] Porphyry here says that, according to these two commentators, the gates of entry into and exit out of mortal genesis were in, respectively, the signs of Cancer (i.e. summer solstice) and Capricorn (i.e. winter solstice); the passage is reproduced as Numenius frg. 31 Des Places.

[621] Martens 2004a, 43; Lentacker, Ervynck and Van Neer 2004, 67f. with fig. 5. Against their assumptions, see M. MacKinnon, *Production and Consumption of Animals in Roman Italy*. JRA Suppl. 54 (Portsmouth RI 2004) 143, who stresses that pigs breed twice a year. He assumes a norm of winter culling. He also contradicts their claim that the lambs must have been born in the late spring (107).

[622] However Beck did note (1998, 337) that another repair of the Virunum mithraeum was completed, and the temple re-dedicated almost 60 years later, on 24 June 239: *CIL* III 4800 = *ILS* 4198 = V.1438 = *ILLPRON* 634 = Piccottini 1994, 12 no. 2. A votive, CIL IX 4109 = V.647, was dedicated by one of the town's public slaves in the financial administration of Nersae on 25 June 172. But that is all.

Roman senators, Nonius Victor Olympius and Aurelius Victor Augentius, who was probably his brother or brother-in-law.[623] It is simplest to present the initiations and their dates in tabular form:

10 August 357	*leontica*
15 September 357	*leontica*
after 15 March 358	*leontica*
4 April 358	*persica*
16 April 358	*heliaca*
19 April 358	*patrica*
23 April 358	*cryfii*
11 March 359	*leontica*
1 April 362	*leontica*
8 April 362	*leontica*
8 April 362	*cryfii*[624]

The dates do cluster in April, but there is no obvious astronomic or calendrical reason for this:[625] August might be thought suitably hot for

[623] *CIL* VI 749–53 = *ILS* 4267a–e, 4268 = V.400–405; for recent discussion see D. Gallo, Il mitreo di S. Silvestro in Capite, in Bianchi 1979, 231–48 (extremely speculative); Griffith 1993, 102–6 (critical of Gallo); J. Bjørnebye, "Hic locus est felix, sanctus, piusque, benignus": *The Cult of Mithras in Fourth-Century Rome* (diss. Bergen 2007) 40f. By 376, Olympius has evidently died, and the leadership been taken over by Augentius, who records the initiation of his son as a *hierocorax* in that year, which was also the thirtieth anniversary of his own first initiation (*CIL* VI 751b = *ILS* 4268 = V.403).

[624] In ascending order, the Latin names of the grades known from the right wall, upper layer, at S. Prisca are: *Corax, Nymphus, Miles, Leo, Perses, Heliodromus, Pater* (Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965, 155–8). This order corresponds both to the order of the frames in the floor-mosaic in the mitreo di Felicissimo in Ostia (Becatti 1954, 105ff. = V.299) and to the names, and the order, listed by Jerome, *Ep.* 107 ad Laetam, 2 (see n. 630 below). Olympius' terms for the initiations he conducted can be correlated with these terms as follows: *patrica* ~ *Patres; heliaca* ~ *Heliodromus; persica* ~ *Perses; leontica* ~ *Leo. Miles, Nymphus* and *Corax* do not appear in Olympius' list (though Augentius refers to *hierocorax* in 376: see preceding note). It is usually thought that *cryfii* corresponds to *Nymphus*, because a veil was associated with that grade; but it is possible that by the later fourth century, in this social class, the first three traditional grades were considered beneath notice, and grouped together as *cryfii*. On this hypothesis, *hierocorax* only gains a mention because of the social rank of Augentius' son, Emilianus Corfonius Olympius. Note that the word *cryfii* is not even turned into a 'Greek' adjective, which lends the other initiations an air of esoteric allure. In the entry for 23 April 358, Olympius says he and Augentius 'revealed' or 'presented' them (*ostenderunt cryfios*); on 8 April 362 the expression has become *tradiderunt cryfios*, unthinkingly aligning it to the rituals ending in *-ica*, where *tradiderunt* makes sense.

[625] Turcan 1999, 252 neatly shows that there can be no correlation between dates and supposed *tutelae*.

Leones, but a further glance shows that there is no apparent pattern here. The initiations must simply have been fitted into the senators' appointment diaries.[626]

b. *Initiation and the Initiatory Grades*

The Palazzo Marignoli inscriptions suggest that, at least in fourth-century Rome, there were no fixed dates, or even seasons, for initiation into the grades, even if we would have to allow that April was popular. And no doubt few mithraea had so many members that they needed several initiations into the various grades each year. It is however generally thought, on the basis of the evidence of S. Prisca and the floor-mosaic of the mid-third-century mitreo di Felicissimo at Ostia (Pl. 28), both of which take the seven grades as a central theme of their internal decoration, that, by contrast with the case in my other two cults, it was usual for all Mithraists to be initiated. This is ordinarily taken to be the pre-requisite for participating in the communal meals as well as in any other rituals that there may have been. As I have mentioned, the cult seems to have had no public face, no celebrations open to public participation. There is however a good deal of uncertainty here, which needs to be explored.

It has usually been assumed that initiation, as in the Palazzo Marignoli cases, was always into a specific grade, beginning with *Corax*, Raven. Manfred Clauss has however suggested that there was a 'basic initiation' for all comers, and that most stopped there.[627] In his view, relatively few progressed beyond that to embark on the grade-ladder. He sees these, from *Corax* at the bottom to *Pater* at the top, as gradations of priesthood, or at any rate, a special privilege desired only by a minority. (The influence of Apuleius' Lucius is plain here.) The main argument adduced is that there is virtually no evidence for the existence of grades all the way along the Britanno-Rhine-Danube sector, where the bulk of evidence for the cult is found. Moreover, even in central Italy, where there is more evidence for grades, only *Pater* occurs at all regularly, and then, far less commonly, *Leo*. The strongest argument against Clauss is the great number of carefully-painted dipinti at Dura-Europus phase

[626] Cf. the discussion of the problem in Rüpke 2007a, 240; 2007b, 115.

[627] M. Clauss, Die sieben Grade des Mithras-Kultes, *ZPE* 82 (1990) 183–194; idem 2000, 131–3. Turcan 2000, 81, who does not claim that the grades were priests, nevertheless entitles his section on them 'Hiérarchie sacerdotale'.

III, which are more or less contemporary with the mitreo di Felicissimo, i.e. c. AD 240–56, and moreover relate to a mainly military context. Many of them take the form of acclamations to initiates on reaching a new grade.[628] Since they were easily visible on the walls, it seems implausible to argue that they only refer to a small minority of initiates. More, perhaps much more, could be said on this head if the Dura dipinti had been properly published;[629] as it is, we have to rely on the rather vague indications of the *Preliminary Report* and the English translation of Cumont's section of the Final Report.[630]

We should conclude that votives on stone were, in general, not considered the appropriate context in which to refer to one's grade, which must, on any account, have been a relatively temporary matter. The question of lack of evidence is partly a generic one, then. But it should also be understood that Clauss' theory was developed before the discovery—or at least the publication—of the Mainz Schlangengefäß, which, as we have seen, both Horn and Merkelbach at once read as a sort of list of the seven grades, primarily because seven persons were represented on it. Even if we reject that interpretation, as we surely must, the very existence of such a vessel, which must have been made

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[628] Rostovtzeff 1939, 116–24; Cumont 1975, 194–203. Francis 1975, 440f. thought he could make out individual progression up the ladder.

[629] It seems that Rostovtzeff made preliminary readings of the graffiti on file-cards, which he kept at his home; Cumont looked through at least some of these and offered suggestions for the readings. In a letter to Cumont of 24 Oct. 1937, Rostovtzeff makes clear that he intended that their full publication should be reserved for the Final Report ("réserver quelques surprises"): Bongard-Levine 2007, 221 no. 126. But already on Dec. 9th he reports that the $4000 for the next season at Dura, and the $3000 for the Final Report of the Mithraeum had not been approved by Yale (ibid., 225 no. 128). The decisive problem, however, was Rostovtzeff's nervous collapse, which became progressively worse from 1941. In 1946 he was still hoping to be able to finish the Final Report, to which Cumont had contributed a long chapter (Cumont 1975), but proved unable to work any more (letter to C.B. Welles of 8 Oct. 1946: Bongard-Levine 2007, 340 no. 22).

[630] Among the more important results of the discovery of the Dura dipinti was that they prompted Cumont to the correct conclusion that the grade *Cryfius*, which had seemed on the basis of the Palazzo Marignoli inscriptions to be the proper name of the second grade, was merely a late-Roman term for the proper *Nymphus*. He then saw that the *symbolon* in Firmicus Maternus, *De errore* 19.1, then often assigned to the cult of Bacchus, applied in reality to the same grade; cf. Bidez and Cumont 1938, 2: 154 text O9b with commentary; Turcan 1982a, 296f. This in turn made it certain that the reading *nymphus* in Jerome, *Ep. 107 ad Laetam* 2, at that time normally emended to *gryfius* or *cryphius*, was correct. It is hard to credit that the reading *cryphius* still appears in Sanzi's text of this latter passage (2003, 426: Mithras 14.1). The original French version of Cumont's contribution to the projected *Final Report* is to be published by Nino Aragni Editore, Turin, in the context of the re-publication of Cumont's major works.

c. AD 120–40, suggests that at least three grades, *Pater*, *Heliodromus* and *Miles*, were known in Germania Superior at that time. By contrast, the term *Heliodromus* never occurs epigraphically in the entire Britanno-Rhine-Danube area, and *Miles* just once.[631]

There is more to be said in favour of two other suggestions. Robert Turcan has recently revived the old idea that the unevenness of the evidence for the grades, with a heavy predominance in central Italy, and especially Rome, might be explained if we assume that in the early or primitive form of the cult there were only two or three levels of initiation, say *Corax*, *Leo* and no doubt *Pater*.[632] In many places this low number was retained until the Late Roman period: one of his main items of evidence is the reverse of the fourth-century Konjic relief (Pl. 15), which, contrary speculations notwithstanding, seems only to represent the two grades, *Corax* and *Leo*.[633] On this view, the figure of seven grades attested at S. Prisca and in the mitreo di Felicissimo (and by Jerome) was the result of the local and incidental spread of astrological ideas in the cult: the number of grades was, in some places, especially in Rome, Ostia and neighbouring areas, artificially inflated in order to correlate with the number of planets. The importance of the latter in the cult is of course clear from sequences of seven blazing altars, seven trees, seven stars on Mithras' fluttering cloak, found on the cult-relief, or in the seven spheres in the Ostian mithraeum of that name (V.239).[634] As we have seen, Origen cites from Celsus a formal Mithraic scheme of the cosmos, divided into two sections or "revolutions" (περίοδοι), a higher (the fixed stars) and a lower, the planetary zone. The latter

[631] In fact the sole more or less complete epigraphic occurrence of the word *Heliodromus* anywhere is on the lower layer of paintings at S. Prisca (see n. 638 below). *Miles*: the same inscription appears on each of a pair of torchbearers from the mithraeum at Wiesbaden (Städtisches Museum inv. nos. 15651 and 363): *CIL* XIII 7570d and 7571 = V. 1231–2 and V. 1233–4: *Deo in[victo] miles piu[s]* (there seems to be some doubt about whether *invictus* was abbreviated). H. Schoppa, *The Mithras Sanctuary*[2] (Wiesbaden 1959) 9 nos. 7 and 9, thought the two objects do not belong together—one is a votive altar, the other a relief. Schwertheim 1974, 108 nos. 86 a,b confirms however that they are a pair. I believe Clauss 1992, 105 is mistaken in thinking that the word *miles* here is a cognomen. Not only is Miles a very uncommon name, the hypothesis fits all too neatly with a desire to whittle away possible references to the grades in keeping with his overall theory. In my view, this inscription is best interpreted as a relatively expensive dedication on the occasion of initiation into the grade *Miles*; even the epithet *pius* recalls those at Dura.

[632] Turcan 1999, 257f.; 2000, 82. This is based directly on Cumont's view that the animal names were the residue of primitive rites of passage (*TMMM* 2: 315).

[633] As Vermaseren pointed out at V.1896.

[634] Turcan 2000, 53; Clauss 2000, 85.

is represented as a κλίμαξ ἑπτάπυλος, a 'ladder' with seven gates or doors, in which each planet is correlated with a metal, and also with some unspecified musical mode. The 'ladder' is specifically said to represent the path through which souls travel right out of the planetary region (σύμβολον…τῆς δι' αὐτῶν τῆς ψυχῆς διεξόδου).[635] This set of associations, or similar ones, may have been the stimulus to link the planets with the grades: at S. Prisca each of them is expressly stated to be 'under the protection of' a planet (*sub tutela*…) just as groups, human and animal, and cities might be claimed to be especially protected by a specific deity.[636] The parallelism between grades and planets would then be a means of increasing the prestige of the former.

It is however quite certain that the order of the planets that sustained such ideas was not everywhere the same: the order given by Celsus: Saturn, Venus, Jupiter, Hermes, Mars, Moon and Sun, which he appears to understand as a possible spatial order (for the soul to pass through) is nothing of the sort: it is the reverse order of the planetary week, and could never have formed a spatial order.[637] Does that imply that there might be different sorts of linkages between grades and planets?—it is certainly interesting that Celsus attributes each planet moral qualities allegedly associated with the appropriate metal, but which seem in fact to be linked to human characters. Moreover, it is certain that even where there do seem to have been seven grades, as at Dura, their names were not necessarily the same as those used in Rome: notoriously, the grade Heliodromus does not occur there.[638] In how many other mithraea were there similar 'aberrations'? And what are the implications for roles in the cult of different grade-names? For example, στερεωτής seems to mean 'ratifier (of the pact'). What are the implications for e.g. Beck's emphasis on the role of *Heliodromus* in the cult, if the idea of sun-travel was unknown at Dura? The implausibility of the arguments of those

[635] Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.22 = Sanzi 2003, 416: Mithras no. 7; cf. the good discussion by Turcan 1975, 44–61, suggesting that it may derive from speculation among Alexandrian Mithraists, or 'philosopher-theologians' interested in the cult.

[636] Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965, 155–8 (right wall, top layer); lower layer: 168f. For *tutela* as a divine role, see e.g. Ovid, *Fasti* 1.415 (of Priapus, *hortorum decus et tutela*); Petronius, *Sat.* 57.2 Buecheler: *ita tutelam huius loci habeam propitiam*; concretely, as something protected: Horace, *Carm.* 4.6.33: (of choirs) *Deliae tutela deae* (i.e. Artemis); Ovid, *Ibis* 593: *tutela Dianae…turba canum*; *Priapea* 75.8: *tutela Rhodos est beata Solis*.

[637] Turcan 1975, 50; 2000, 110f.; Beck 1988, 73–85.

[638] Rostovtzeff et al. 1939, 123f. The name for Heliodromus at Dura seems to be στερεωτής, which occurs "frequently" but is unknown elsewhere (cf. Francis 1975, 441).

who try to find seven grades of the Mainz Schlangengefäß is relevant here: it may prove that the grades *Miles* and *Heliodromus* were known in Germania Superior between AD 120 and 140, but it certainly does not prove that all, or only, seven grades existed there. It is equally familiar that at Dura there occur a number of other status-terms, such as μάγος/*magus* and σοφιστής, to say nothing of the words μελλολέων, 'candidate for the grade *Leo*' and ἀντίπατρος, 'deputy *Pater*' that occur nowhere else.[639] Cumont did argue that the first two do not seem to be used as grade-terms but either as praise-words or, in the case of μάγος/*magus*, as the local equivalent of ἱερεύς/*sacerdos* (1975, 202), and I incline to believe him.[640] But there at least one case among the unpublished graffiti, it seems, where σοφιστής itself has a praise-epithet, which makes it look suspiciously like a grade (or perhaps an alternative grade-name).[641] The case at Dura must remain open.

Another recent suggestion is that, instead of relying doggedly on Jerome and the mitreo di Felicissimo, we should take the epigraphic domination of the grades *Pater* and *Leo* seriously, and infer that in practice they were by far the most important grades.[642] This is a less radical position than Turcan's, since it allows that normatively there may have been seven grades. The argument however is that in practice the initiates were quickly hurried through the lower stages until they became *Leones*; fewer would have wanted to rise higher, and they would again have been hurried through the grades *Perses* and *Heliodromus* until they became *Patres*. The accumulation of *Patres* led to the institution of super-*Patres*, the *Patres patrum*. The implication is that the figure of seven grades was to a large extent theoretical: Jerome, S. Prisca and the mitreo di Felicissimo provide us, as it were, with a 'synoptic' not a naturalistic view—they tell us the theory, but not the practice, for which we have to look at the epigraphic evidence. This account valorises in part the well-known claim by Euboulus that τοὺς μὲν μετέχοντας τῶν αὐτῶν ὀργίων μύστας λέοντας καλεῖν…τοὺς δὲ ὑπηρετοῦντας

[639] Rostovtzeff et al. 1939, 123; Cumont 1975, 198–203; Turcan rightly speaks of "un certain flottement ou de variantes étrangères au schème planétaire" (2000, 83).

[640] Francis however pointed out that the word ἱερεύς does in fact seem to occur among the unpublished graffiti (1975, 440 with n. 80).

[641] Francis ap. Cumont 1975, 202 n. 284: νάμ[α 'Αλε]ξάνδρ[ῳ καὶ] Γεροντ[ίῳ] σοφιστῇ ἀκ[εραίῳ ? (*IMDur*. 39).

[642] Rüpke 2007a, 213.

κόρακας.[643] As in the case of Clauss' suggestion, the model is the usual practice of initiation in other cults.

Although these two arguments are not aligned with each other, their cumulative force seems to me considerable. Taken together, they make it more likely than not that the usual description of 'the seven grades of Mithraism', with its endless recycling of the images from the mitreo di Felicissimo as though they were articles in some Mithraic credo, is a comforting modern chimera, designed to suggest that the cult everywhere had the same organisation—the hidden influence of the Cumontian paradigm, and of an idealised and de-historicised Christianity, is all too plain.[644] *A fortiori*, Merkelbach's attempt to show that 'the grades' are everywhere in—literally all over—the cult-relief and the mithraeum must appear deluded (1984, 84–6).

There is no need here to rehearse the evidence that tends to confirm Rüpke's claim about *Leo* as a normative grade.[645] It is just worth pointing out that, whereas the frescoes at S. Prisca are always invoked in confirmation of the claim that there were seven grades, correlated with the seven planets, it is hardly ever noted that what they mainly do is to highlight the grade *Leo*: the upper fresco on the left wall names eight such men, including Heliodorus, Gelasius and Phoebus; and the so-called suovetaurilia fresco on the right wall another five, including Nicephorus and Theodorus.[646] By comparison, the 'procession' of the grades occupies rather little space. Two other third-century items of evidence are equally suggestive. First is the name *leonteum* apparently given to the mithraeum, or part of it, in a now well-known inscription from S. Gemini near Terni in Umbria:

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[643] *De abstin.* 4.16.3 with Gordon 1980, 32; Merkelbach 1984, 86 n. 1; 241; Turcan wrongly claims that the passage states that the *three lower grades* were called 'servants' and the *four higher* 'participants' (2000, 86). The notorious passage about women being called 'hyenas' comes between the two clauses.

[644] E.g. Vermaseren 1963, 138–53; Gordon 1980, 67f.; Merkelbach 1984, 86–129; Clauss 2000, 131–8; Beard, North, Price 1998, 2: 305f.; see also the first edition of this book, pp. 265–74. MacMullen 1981, 124 already doubted the fixity of the figure seven.

[645] See esp. Spada 1979; also Gordon 1975, 241f.; 1980, 36f.; Merkelbach 1984, 100–9 (largely fanciful); Clauss 2000, 135f.; Turcan 2000, 88. I discuss below the grade *Corax*, for which there is certain amount of interesting iconographic evidence in connection with the banquet of Mithras and Sol.

[646] Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965, 148–50; 160–2; as for the lower layer, six figures are visible on the left wall, four on the right (ibid. 165–7).

> *Leonteum, cum signo et cetero cultu exornatum ex permissu sanctissimi ordinis, ex pec(unia) sua a solo fecerunt leones, consummati ab Egnatio Re[t]o sacerdote legit(imo) et collatore, T. Lepidius Ho, Alexander et Amicus circ(itores) Aug. n., LL Vicri(i) Severus et Speratus, T. Satrontus Sabinianus, P. Vatinius Iustus, L. Iulius Felix, L. Longinius Stachys faber, de HS V m(ilibus) n(ummum). LDDD.*[647]

The other is the title *Pater leonum* that occurs in an analogous document, a fragmentary album of *cultores Mithrae* from Sentinum, near Sassoferrato (also in Umbria), from which it appears that the term *Leones* could be used to mean all the Mithraic initiates *tout court*.[648] This in turn would imply that, if there were other grades at Sentinum, those lower than *Leo* were not thought of as *cultores* proper, and perhaps even that there were no other grades. Finally we may just again note the terms μελλολέων and νέος λέων at Dura: the first is evidence of a particular need to prepare for the grade *Leo*, perhaps by registering with the *Pater* one's wish to be admitted; the second for particular celebration on achieving the grade (the word νέος does not seem to occur in connection with others).[649]

Acceptance of the idea that the grade-structure, at least as usually understood, may be something of a chimera fits with Clauss' suggestion that, despite the overall consistency of the tauroctony and the general similarity of mithraea over the Empire, there were considerable divergencies in practice and belief over the cult's range: "When a religion is in transit, and spreads widely in both space and social location, often only the language and the imagery remain constant" (2000, 17). That point allows us to throw into relief another well-known fact, that the

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[647] First published by Ciotti 1978, 233–9 no. 1; repr. Aloe Spada 1979, 647. Despite its importance, it has never been re-published by *AE*. An English version in Beard, North and Price 1998, 2: 309 no. 12.5 c (v); cf. Brashear 1992, 27f. The term *collator* means that, besides being the initiating *Pater*, Reparatus also subscribed money towards the building, or refurbishing, of the *leonteum*. *Consummati* evidently means *consacrati*, as Ciotti pointed out. There is some unclarity about the punctuation after Honorinus: Ciotti suggests that he may have had an *agnomen* Alexander; the imperial slave Amicus would then be the sole *circitor*. *Vicrius* is othewise unrecorded: it is likely to be a lapicide's error for *Viccius*. Similarly with *Satrontus*: if it is not a local variant on the common nomen *Satrius* (cf. *Sattius*, *Satrienus*), it may be a lapicide's error for *Sarronius*, itself however only recorded in *CIL* II 6259 l. 18 and V 3027 = *AE* 1967: 117.

[648] *CIL* XI 5737 = *ILS* 4215 = V.688, dated mid-III^{p} (see n. 613 above). In my view, the inscription lists four *patroni*, headed by C. Propertius Profuturus (the word is in the plural). The important public slave Hilarianus, denoted *pater leonum*, thus heads the list of *cultores* proper.

[649] Cumont 1975, 199; more fully, Francis 1975, 440; 443f. We may be reminded of *AE* 1980: 49b and 50b: *Leo vivas, cum Caedicio patre*, with Panciera 1979, 92f.

initiation-scenes painted on the revetments of the podia at S. Maria Capua Vetere (Pl. 25) seem to bear no relation to any ritual ascribed by literary sources to the cult of Mithras, though there have been attempts to reconcile them.[650] Nor do they bear any indication of being related to the hypothetical grade-structure.

Instead of pretending that there were fixed and well-nigh universal grade-initiations, therefore, I think it more realistic to discuss Mithraic initiation not primarily in terms of the grades, but through the perspective of two alternative 'frames': 1) surviving images of initiation, that is, the 'test of bravery' on the Mainz Schlangengefäß and the podium frescoes in the mithraeum of S. Maria Capua Vetere; and 2) selected bye-scenes of complex reliefs. It is obvious that these are in no sense unmediated or 'true' documentary images of a past reality: they are frozen and idealised instants within longer rituals.[651] The intention is to by-pass the issue of their relation to the supposed grade-system, and indeed to one another, and underline their independent contributions to the theme of initiation in the cult. It need not matter that the two frames cannot be integrated: I have already emphasised the likelihood that such rituals were conducted differently in different localities. We have no right to generalise from the few literary accounts, which are located neither in time nor in space.[652]

1. Images of initiation. The main contribution of the surviving images of initiation, which are widely separated from one another in time and space, is to underline the role of fear, submission and endurance in Mithraic rituals of this type.[653] Even if the details differed from

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[650] Vermaseren 1971: 48: "…hardly any of the descriptions in the ancient authors concerning initiations in the Mithraic mysteries are really useful for the interpretation of these unique Capuan frescoes". His only inference, however, was the (correct) conclusion that the Church Fathers are a poor source of information. The most interesting 'failure' is the impossibility of reconciling his panel R V with the report of the refusal of a crown by the initiate into the grade *Miles* reported by Tertullian, *De corona* 15.3–4 = Sanzi 2003, 414: Mithras no. 5.3 (ibid., 36–42).

[651] Gordon 2001, 262f.; 2008.

[652] I have already made use of Porphyry's acount of the initiation of Lions and Persians with honey (see Chap. 3.4 above). The passage about liberation in 'Ambrosiaster', *Quaest. vet. et nov. test.* 94.11f. = Sanzi 2003, 429f.: Mithras no. 17 deserves no credence (cf. Gordon 2001b, 259). I also have doubts about Tertullian's famous passage on Mithras as the crown of the *Miles* (see n. 650); cf. P. Beskow, Tertullian on Mithras, in Hinnells 1994, 51–60 at 52–4, rightly emphasising the Christian spin. On the wider aims of Tertullian's account of Roman religion, see C. Ames, Roman Religion in the Vision of Tertullian, in Rüpke 2007d, 457–71.

[653] As I have said, the Mainz Schlangengefäß must have been made ca. 120–40 (Huld-Zetsche 2004, 226). The Capua frescoes date from c. 220–40: Vermaseren 1971, 51.

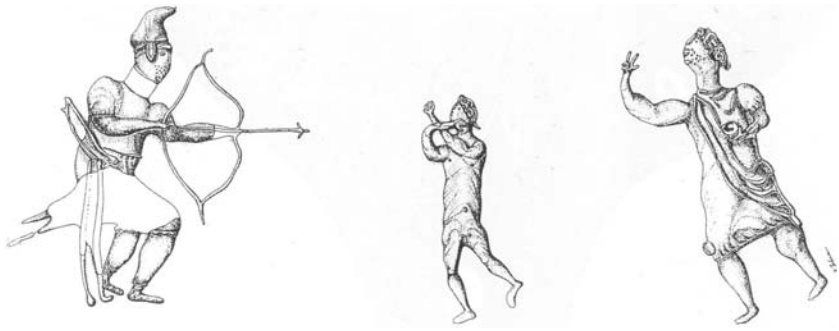

Fig. 5. The 'Test of Bravery' group on the Mainz Schlangengefäß, c. AD 120–40.

place to place, this feature seems to have been a constant. The most obvious point about the 'test of bravery' scene at Mainz (Text-fig. 5) is the relative sizes of the three participants: the initiand (centre) is much smaller than either the *Pater* (l.) or the mystagogue (r.). The exposure of the initiand's genitals underscores the theme of humiliation: heroic nudity is one thing, mere nakedness in the presence of those who are clothed quite another.[654] Moreover, it seems clear that his wrists are tied together, and that by raising his arms in front of his face he is attempting to shield himself against the arrow that the *Pater* is about to fire (or pretending to fire).[655]

The podium frescoes at Capua convey much the same impression. Discovered in 1922, and now sadly much deteriorated, these are the most impressive iconographic evidence for initiation rituals in any of the oriental cults.[656] There were originally (at least) six panels on the right-hand podium, seven on the left. Of these, only seven survive, four on

[654] The barbotine technique used in creating the figures makes it difficult to decide whether he is wearing a shift of some sort. I assume the detail of the genitals conveys the idea 'nakedness'. The initiand's nakedness is stressed visually at Capua by the use of reddish-brown paint for the entire body, which contrasts sharply with the white tunic of the 'mystagogue' and the splendid cloak and other apparel of the initiator.

[655] "That the bow and arrow were real enough and the archery potentially deadly, we need scarcely doubt" (Beck 2000, 150 = 2004a, 60).

[656] A. Minto, S. Maria Capua Vetere: scoperta di una cripta mitriaca, *NSc*[5] 21 (1924) 353–74; the standard publication is however Vermaseren 1971, 26–47 with essential colour-plates; see also Merkelbach 1984, 287–90 figs. 28–32. All references are to Vermaseren's account. Their deteriorated state unfortunately makes it impossible to reproduce them here.

the right, three on the left. None has any textual commentary or label, so that we are completely dependent on the images themselves. Minto thought they represented the totality of initiations into the grades, but he made no attempt to explain how thirteen panels squared with seven grades.[657] With the possible exception of the first panel on the right podium, no developmental progression is evident. We can thus only comment on the most obvious (external) features. In each case, there is once again a striking disparity in relative sizes between initiate and mystagogue (usually three figures are represented, as with the 'test of bravery' at Mainz), intended to convey the asymmetry of the relation between established status and aspiration, knowledge and ignorance, confidence and fearfulness.[658] We may even intuit here an attempt at conveying the subjectivity of the experience of initiation, the apprehension, the uncertainty, the sense of helplessness. This aspect is stressed in the first scene on the right podium (R I), where the initiand is clearly blindfolded and being pushed forward by the 'mystagogue' into an undefined, unknowable, space; his anxiety is conveyed by means of the half-outstretched arms. In most other cases, the initiand is placed squarely in the centre of the panel, with initiator and mystagogue on either side of him: in each case, he is the passive subject of others' actions: in L IV he is being forced to kneel and signal his humiliation by crossing his fore-arms in front of his chest; in R V, his hand seem clearly to be tied behind his back while the mystagogue holds an uncertain object over his head. In another panel (L II), the initiand is lying prostrate on the ground or on some sort of bier or bed, with his arms stretched out in front of him; if Vermaseren's reconstruction is correct, a scorpion has been placed above him, evidently as a form of threat. In two other panels, the initiand is being subjected to further tests of bravery or steadfastness by having firebrands thrust in his face (R II), or singeing his outstretched arms (L III). To the extent that these scenes imply fear and suffering as an essential part of Mithraic initiation, they tend to confirm Gregory of Nazianzen's brief allusion to τὰς ἐν

[657] Clauss 2000, 102f. speaks of five scenes as initiatory; I do not know why he excludes the other two.

[658] Cf. Barth 1975, 219f. on secrecy and learning. It may be, however, that the role of 'mystagogue', as at Eleusis, was to provide a certain amount of support and instruction, cf. Dio of Prusa, *Or.* 12.34.

Μίθρου βασάνους καὶ καύσεις ἐνδίκους τὰς μυστικάς, for all that he interprets them in good Christian fashion as punishments.[659]

It has recently been argued that we should interpret these scenes as an expression of the internalisation within Mithraism of the steeply-stratified social system of the Empire; the Mithraic use of suffering as an essential element of its initiations is to be understood as a means of staging a moral hierarchy.[660] On the assumption that these representations can indeed be generalised fairly widely within the cult, I would rather see them as asserting two kinds of difference: most fundamentally, of course, the difference between (real) men and all others, but especially women (we may take it that women conceptually epitomise all those who are excluded); but beyond that, as creating a specific, cumulative identity, what Bourdieu calls a 'social essence': "Instituer, assigner une essence, une compétence, c'est imposer un droit d'être qui est un devoir être (ou d'être). C'est *signifier* à quelqu'un ce qu'il est et lui signifier qu'il a à se conduire en conséquence. L'indicatif en ce cas est un impératif" (Bourdieu 2001, 179). The experience of such initiatory suffering constructs a special form of distinction, which separates Mithraists progressively from those who have not undergone such experiences, somatises the consciousness of difference, so that there is no going back into an 'innocent' world.[661] It may well be that novices missed the point of some, or even much, of the imagery presented to them in the initiatory sequences (cf. Barth 1975, 209); but the experience of fear and (limited) suffering in different forms constructed a more powerful, and unforgettable, message about what at S. Prisca is construed as the *maxima divum*, the injunctions of the gods.[662]

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[659] Gregory, *Or.* 4 (*Adv. Iulianum*) 70 = Sanzi 2003, 425f.: Mithras no. 13.1; also 89; *Or.* 39 (*In sancta lumina*) 5 = Sanzi ibid. 426: Mithras no. 13.3. The scholia, by contrast, exaggerate wildly: see the texts assembled by Cumont, *TMMM* 2: 27, and the passage from Nonnus cited by E. Wüst, Über einige Probleme der Mithrasmysterien, *ARW* 32 (1935) 211–27 at 215f.; cf. Clauss 2000, 102f.

[660] Cf. Gordon 2001b, 262–6; 2007, 403f.; 2008.

[661] "Tous les groupes confient au corps, traité comme une mémoire, leurs dépots les plus précieux, et l'utilisation que les rites d'initiation font, en toute société, de la souffrance infligée au corps se comprend si l'on sait que, comme nombre d'expériences psychologiques l'ont montré, les gens adhèrent d'autant plus fortement à une institution que les rites initiatiques qu'elle leur a imposés ont été plus sévères et plus douloureux" (Bourdieu 2001, 182f.). In a simpler but similar vein: Clauss 2000, 105.

[662] See the discussion of the reading at Chap. 3 n. 40 above. In view of my argument below about the myth providing the inspiration for initiatory rituals, I am keen to retain the general sense of Vermaseren's reading, since it would encourage the idea

2. Selected bye-scenes of complex reliefs: I have already emphasised the ritual importance of reversible Mithraic reliefs in relation to the role of communal eating in the cult. We can however make a wider point as well. The very existence of cult-reliefs with two faces that could be deployed in the course of rituals supports the idea that a major function of the reliefs with bye-scenes, which are the dominant type all the way along the Rhine-Danube frontier, was to provide a charter for rituals of various types that were performed in the mithraeum. The fact that the banquet-scene appears repeatedly among these bye-scenes (Pl. 6, right pilaster, bottom scene; Pl. 11, bottom r.) suggests that by no means all of these rituals were initiatory; but at least one or two seem to be.

The Mainz 'test of bravery' scene, with the Pater figured as archer, recalls the bye-scene in which Mithras shoots an arrow at a rock-face in order to cause fresh water to gush from it (Pl. 13).[663] If there is a genetic link, however, the narrative significance of that miracle, inter alia to nourish Cautes and Cautopates, the *gemini fratres* of another of the lines at S. Prisca,[664] has been pushed into the background: on the Mainz Schlangengefäß the motif is merely the inspiration for an initiatory test, an inspiration that has of course to do with Mithras, but in a quite different semantic context. Likewise, if there really is a scorpion in scene L II at Capua, the inspiration must come from the animal's location at the bull's testicles in the cult-relief.[665] Apart from the suggestion that its sting is there dangerous and painful, however, the initiatory ritual has again ignored its original narrative significance: the initiate is not a bull. These examples suggest that the myth was understood as 'good to think' in the construction of Mithraic initiatory ritual.

A slightly different example is offered by the frequent bye-scene sometimes known as the Initiation of Sol, or Sol's Obeisance (fig. 29;

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that the *Transitus dei*, the god's dragging the bull into the cave before the killing, inspired *symbola* in the course of some ritual or other.

663 Clauss 2000, 71f.; Turcan 2000, 96; 2004, 260f.; also Merkelbach 1984, 112–5 (impossible interpretation).

664 Again, the line as read by Vermaseren is full of uncertainties: *Fons concluse petr[is] qu[i g]eminos aluisti ne[c]ta[re fr]atr[e]s* (Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965, 193f. no. 4, with the facsimile on p. 189 fig. 66).

665 The possibility that the scorpion *is* present at Capua is perhaps strengthened by its rather surprising appearance on a two-handled *tazza*, found in the mithraeum at Taunum/Friedberg and used for burning incense: V. 1061 = Schwertheim 1974, 51 no. 47 L = Merkelbach 1984, 343 fig. 102 = Bird 2004, 193 fig. 1.1. Since it also shows a ladder, it is usually assumed that is connected with an initiation (Bird 2004, 192).

also Pl. 11, to the right of Mithras' head).[666] This scene falls somewhere in the context of the events after the killing of the bull and—apparently—before the banquet they share.[667] Although the details of the scene are extremely contentious—there seem in fact to be a number of different versions, which would support my wider point about the diversity of rituals in the cult—all seem to show Sol kneeling or crouching in front of Mithras, who stands upright and (in most cases) raises one arm in a threatening gesture. We seem therefore to be presented in the context of the myth-narrative with the same fundamental initiatory themes as we have seen at Capua: threat, apprehension and humiliation.[668] This scene, or continuum of scenes, is apparently followed by the *iunctio dextrarum*, the agreement by Mithras and Sol solemnised by a hand-clasp (Pl. 18), which must be the mythic charter for the symbolic act that confirmed each initiate as an initiate, namely the συνδεξίωσις, the shaking of hands with the *Pater*.[669] In this context, therefore, Sol must be the exemplary or ideal-typical Mithraic initiate.

I believe, then, that we would be well-advised not to attempt too close a correlation between the archaeological evidence for initiation and the supposed grade-system. Although hierarchy was indeed an important theme in the cult, initiation is best understood as a means of creating a specific religious identity and a particular relationship to Mithras, the ritual counterpart to my exploration above of the cult's

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[666] Initiation: Turcan 2000, 98: "Le Soleil reconnaît sa (i.e. of Mithras) préeminence en se faisant initier au grade de *Miles* en quelque sorte"; obeisance: Clauss 2000, 149f. (in the German, Unterwerfung).

[667] Merkelbach 1984, 123f. (interpretation as the initiation of Heliodromus); Clauss 2000, 149f. Cumont 1975, 175f. thought the scene occurred *before* the death of the bull.

[668] Cumont 1975, 175 thought that the image at Dura proved the object was a Phrygian cap; this is accepted by Clauss 2000, 149f. Dieterich however, working from the 'Mithras Liturgy', saw a calf's shoulder, which he interpreted as a symbol of the Pole star (1903, 77). R.L. Beck, Interpreting the Ponza Zodiac, *JMS* 2.2 (1978) 87–147 at 124–7 (= Beck 2004a, 209–11) supported Dieterich on the basis of the ceiling-image at Ponza. R.L. Gordon and J.R. Hinnells, Some New Photographs of Well-Known Mithraic Monuments, *JMS* 2.2 (1978) 198–223 at 213–9, produced close-up photos to indicate that the object is in fact, in at least some cases, the hind-quarter of the bull. This is flatly denied by Turcan 2000, 98, without new evidence. Burkert 1987, 74 remains judiciously neutral. However it does seem clear, as I have observed, that the monuments depict a variety of somewhat different scenarios. The subject would repay more detailed study.

[669] Firmicus Maternus, *De errore* 5.2: μύστα βοοκλοπίης, συνδέξιε πατρὸς ἀγαυοῦ, with Turcan 1982a, 208f.; LeGlay 1978; Merkelbach 1984, 107; Clauss 2000, 42; 152.

ethical demands. We may complement this point by means of a brief discussion of the well-known, and problematic, 'Mithras-Liturgy'. Now that we have Hans-Dieter Betz' very detailed commentary (Betz 2003), it is unnecessary to rehearse here the debates that have surrounded this text since Albrecht Dieterich rescued it from the obscurity of the Great Paris Magical Codex in 1903.[670] Dieterich's aim was of course to undermine the authority of Cumont's magisterial reconstruction of the *mystères de Mithra* on the basis of the archaeological monuments and inscriptions by arguing that the 'Mithras liturgy' gave us access to a very different world of elaborate secret rituals, heavenly ascents, cosmokinetic phenomena, magic. In his view, features such as these were also part of the cult of Mithras. Cumont immediately repudiated this argument, reiterating that the specifically Mithraic content was extremely small, and probably due to the role of the Sun in Graeco-Egyptian magical praxis. The name Mithras, which admittedly appears in the 'Liturgy', is not of the essence of the ritual.[671]

The 'Mithras Liturgy' offers a means of gaining direct audience with an exalted denizen of heaven, in order to obtain an oracular response. As such, it fits with the larger genre of the 'authentic meeting with god' in these texts, the most exalted form of communication with the other world. It is nevertheless quite unusual within that genre by envisioning a complete scenario of admission through various stages and levels, until the final climactic encounter can be attained. Dieterich thought he could make out seven distinct levels in this advance towards the ultimate revelation and it was on this basis, together with the evident (or apparent) similarity between the god of the final revelation, who he claimed was similar to the Mithras of the mysteries, that he coined the name 'Mithras Liturgy'.[672] The most prominent recent supporter of the view that the 'Liturgy' can be used as more or less direct evidence for the mysteries is Manfred Clauss, who treats it as an example of

[670] The so-called 'Liturgy' in fact constitutes ll. 475–820 of the longest and most important surviving magical text in Greek (with a little Coptic), *PGrM* IV (= Bibl. Nat. suppl. gr. 574).

[671] F. Cumont, Un livre nouveau sur la liturgie païenne, *Revue de l'instruction publique en Belge* 46 (1904) 1–10. On the central importance of the Sun is this praxis, see Fauth 1995, 34–120.

[672] Dieterich 1903, 89f. Betz provides a useful break-down of the various elements and stages of the prescribed ritual (2003, 60–87). But he too manages to find seven stages.

the type of knowledge that a μύστης acquired in the process of initiation.[673] It is however not at all clear from Clauss' account how we are to square the very elaborate scenario of the 'Liturgy' with what else is known about the cult of Mithras; whether we are to suppose that all initiates learned such rituals and their *symbola*, or whether they were only revealed to *Patres*.[674] Clauss' use of the text indeed borders on incoherence, since it is quite incompatible with his general view of the limited role played by initiation in the cult.

As Wolfgang Fauth has convincingly demonstrated, however, it is far from clear that there are seven different stages of ascension: Dieterich had to do considerable violence to the text in order to extract this number (1995, 22). Moreover, Dieterich argued that in the text Mithras is the father of Helios, which certainly cannot have been the case in the mysteries as we know them. Finally, the supreme god whom the practitioner is to meet, and who is not named, but described as ὑπερμεγέθη, φωτινὴν ἔχοντα τὴν ὄψιν, νεώτερον, χρυσοκόμαν, ἐν χιτῶνι λευκῷ καὶ χρυσῷ στεφάνῳ καὶ ἀναξυρίσι…(ll. 696–700), is, for all the Persian trousers, clearly not Mithras—who could describe Mithras as wearing a white tunic and a golden crown?—but the Alexandrian-Egyptian Agathos Daimon in solar mode.[675] If we are to make any use of the 'Liturgy' in the present context it can only be indirectly: the legitimacy or plausibility of invoking the name of Mithras—various forms of the name appear in *nomina magica*—in an eclectic ritual of this type is derived from the prestige of the mysteries, and the habit of cosmic and esoteric speculation they clearly encouraged—so much at least is clear from the neo-Platonist interest in them.[676] Esoteric speculation however cannot be made to run within narrow lines.[677]

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[673] 2000, 105–8.

[674] The account is full of misleading claims. For example, it is said that the 'Liturgy' is an *apathanatismos*, which was a quite different sort of ritual; in fact it has no title, and the aim clearly stated in l. 484f. is ascension into heaven and being able to look around there.

[675] Fauth 1995, 22f. I cannot understand how Betz can write: "This god is certainly Mithras" (2003, 182).

[676] Turcan 1975; the cosmic and astral speculation can be followed—at a distance—in Beck 1988; 2000 and 2006.

[677] Despite that, this may be the place to say that I agree with the generally negative reaction to William Brashear's attempt (1992) to show the Mithraic character of a scrap of papyrus containing a series of questions and answers in an esoteric, perhaps mystery, context. The single word λεοντίῳ (→ l. 8), without a satisfactory context, is insufficient to prove anything. As is clear from Brashear's own commentary, and the flailing efforts of those who gave him suggestions, the rest of the text, insofar as it makes

I wish to end this sub-section however with another consideration not directly concerned with the issue of initiation, but with the Mithraic understanding of mystery. One of the most interesting Mithraic objects is a shallow terra-sigillata dish now in the Landesmuseum, Trier, which carries a representation of the banquet-scene (Pl. 30).[678] Although it has an eyelet on the back, showing that it was probably displayed on a wall, it is one of the very few Mithraic items found in a grave.[679] In some ways the scene depicted is commonplace for the Mithraic iconography of the banquet. Mithras and Sol are reclining at a table spread with food. Sol raises his *rhyton/cornu* to drink a toast, Mithras is being handed his by one of the torchbearer-waiters. So far so ordinary. What attracts my attention however is the foreground: in the centre, more prominent than the feasting gods, lies a large, maned—therefore male—lion, one paw slightly raised. Directly below him is a krater encircled by a snake. On either side are metonyms for the torchbearers, a cock on the left for Cautes, another bird, probably a nightingale, for Cautopates.[680]

What is important about this image is its deliberate esoterism, its rejection of the public meanings implied by the art of civic religion, its reliance upon a network of associations and interpretations built up entirely through the experience of initiation and unavailable beyond. The dish itself is of the kind that one might use for eating off. Onto this eating surface has been floated a dense evocation of the central mystery of the cult, in a manner that deliberately calls attention to its incomprehensibility, its invitation, as I see it, to reverence, reverie, mystic contemplation. The memory of repeated communal meals has here become the trigger for something beyond mere good-fellowship. We can understand something of how this effect of spiritual density is achieved.

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any sense, does not further the hypothesis that the context is Mithraic. See S. Daris, *Aegyptus* 73 (1993) 286f.; C. Harrauer, *CE* 68 (1993) 280f.; R. Turcan, Un 'catéchisme' mithriaque?, *CRAI* (1992) 563f.

[678] V. 988 = Schwertheim 1974, 239f. no. 206 = Merkelbach 1984, 338 fig. 93 (poor photo). There are two other images of an analogous kind, which I might also have chosen in this context: the reverse of the Fiano Romano relief (V. 641b), on which see R. Turcan 1986; Beck 2006, 27f.; and the relief from Tróia, now in Lisbon (V. 798), with the excellent photo in Schütze 1972, pl. 96.

[679] Excavated in 1906 from a grave in the Skt. Matthäus necropolis: H. Drexel, *BJ* 118 (1909) 232f. It is assigned to III^{P}. Drexel wrongly believed it was an import from Alexandria.

[680] A cock and a nightingale (?) represent the torch-bearers in their diurnal aspect on the Mithraic brooch from Ostia now in the Ashmolean: Becatti 1954, 129f with pl.XXXVIII.1 = V. 318 = Merkelbach 1984, 295 fig. 39. Elsewhere, Cautopates might be represented by, or as, an owl.

It relies upon the tension set up between cult-relief, the evocation of a mythic narrative and the performativity of ritual. The combination lion-krater-snake, so familiar in cult-reliefs along the Rhine-Danube zone, and so baffling for modern interpreters, has been taken from the tauroctony-scene and located where it truly belongs, at the banquet of Mithras and Sol, itself a paradigm for Mithraic ritual praxis.[681]

In a sense this is perfectly familiar: the same is true of all Schlangengefäße, such as the one from Mainz that I have mentioned several times now. Such objects are physical embodiments, for ritual use, of the same three elements of the cult-relief. A very unusual, indeed unique, find from the festal rubbish-pit at Tienen underscores the point.[682] For a celebration, a large coarse-ware vessel was evidently commissioned as a Schlangengefäß of a special kind: a clay tube, opening into the vessel at the bottom, runs up the inside wall and emerges onto the outside wall as a (hollow) snake. As such, it runs along the outer wall for a few centimetres. Unfortunately the head is lost, but evidently the snake's mouth formed the open end of the tube. When the jar was filled with wine, it was clearly possible to apply one's mouth to the snake's head and suck a mouthful of wine out of the pot. When we add that the wine must have been warmed, it is not too far fetched to see here a mimesis of the bull's warm blood flowing from the wound.[683]

Yet the lion's sheer centrality, its dominance of the iconographic field of the dish from Trier, lends its presence an uniquely enigmatic quality, a deliberate challenge to the viewer's powers of association and 'reading'. The lion is, by implication, *the* baffling centre of this cult, the figure that winds its way through so many apparently disparate contexts and thus links them one to the other: the grade of *Leo*, the symbols showed or imparted at the λεοντικά, the fire-shovel in the Leo-frame at the mitreo di Felicissimo, the *Leones* who burn incense and through whom the speakers of the famous S. Prisca lines are 'consumed',[684] the

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[681] See recently Bird 2004, who shows that vessels decorated in this manner were frequently used as incense-burners; also M. Thomas, Kultgefäße in Terra Sigillata aus Rheinzabern, in Mertens and De Boe 2004, 201–12; V. Gassner, Snake-decorated Vessels from the *canabae* of Carnuntum—Evidence for another *mithraeum*?, ibid. 229–229–57. I know of no special study devoted to these objects and their role in the cult.

[682] Martens 2004a, 34; eadem, 2004b, 340 no. 3. The vessel is 39.5 cm high, and had scorch marks on the base—it had been repeatedly placed over a cooking fire.

[683] Martens had the interior tested for residues: it contained no fats, so had not been used as a normal cooking vessel.

[684] *Accipe thuricremos, pater, accipe, sancte, Leones per quos thuradam//us, per quos consumimur ipsi*: Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965, 224f. (ll. 16 and 17). Two straightforward

constellation Leo, the 'house' of the Sun, the Sun itself, the lion on the tauroctony, its double on the Schlangengefäße, the solitary lion that runs past or through or lurks in so many cult-reliefs, especially in the Danube area, the lion in German mithraea as common metaphor for death, the lion as the face of the Lionheaded god, lord of time and the cosmos.[685] Some of its symbolic force the lion undoubtedly owes to the familiar Eratosthenic trope that linked the constellation Leo intimately with the living King of Beasts; but there is evidently an entire thematic here that we shall never be able to unravel, in part at least because it was never fully explained or verbalised even in the cult. As much as any other single document of Mithraism, this humble sigillata plate from Trier justifies us in claiming that the notion 'mystery', in the sense of a privileged, overwhelming religious experience "between perplexity and exaltation", applies in full to the cult of Mithras.[686]

metrical hexameters, the only lines at S. Prisca that seem to follow on directly from one another.

[685] "The leontocephaline has strong solar associations, if it may not be said to be a representation of the sun, and the sun, both as an independent figure and as an hypostasis of Mithras, is a fully divine being in the cult… and intimately involved in Mithraic soteriology": Jackson 1985, 20–32; cf. the identification by Lactantius Placidus, *Schol. in Stat. Theb*. 1.719f. (reprinted at *TMMM* 2: 46–9) of tauroctonous Mithras with *Sol leonis vultu cum tiara*, defended by Beck 1994, 46.

[686] The citation is from Burkert 1987, 114 à propos Proclus, *In Remp*. 2 p. 108.17–30 Kroll.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ORIENTAL CULTS AND CHRISTIANITY[1]

> We are told that a people of true Christians would form the most perfect society imaginable. I see in this supposition only one great difficulty: that a society of true Christians would not be a society of men.
>
> J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract* Bk. 4. 8, tr. G.D.H. Cole

> Lastly, those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the being of a God. Promises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist. The taking away of God, though but even in thought, dissolves all; besides also, those that by their atheism undermine and destroy all religion, can have no pretence of religion whereupon to challenge the privilege of a toleration.
>
> John Locke, *Letter on Tolerance* (1689), tr. W. Popple

> Der Monotheismus dagegen, diese starre Consequenz der Lehre von Einem Normalmenschen—also der Glaube an einem Normalgott, neben dem es nur noch falsche Lügengötter giebt—war vielleicht die grösste Gefahr der bisherigen Menschen.
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* Buch 3, nr. 143 (eds. Colli and Montinari, Berlin 1973, p. 168)

It is often said that the historical importance of the oriental cults lies less in their intrinsic value or appeal than in their relation to Christianity. The traditional study of the history of religions has in fact understood the latter as issuing from the imperfect discourse of the religions that preceded it.[2] The possible levels of analysis are thus extremely varied, and far exceed my aims in this final chapter. As the rest of the book

[1] [It will be clear that this chapter is heavily influenced by Alvar's Spanish background. The Spanish church traditionally has had, and under Archbishop Antonio Rouco Varela still has, a high political profile. Tr.]

[2] J.-P. Vernant, *Religions, histoires, raisons* (Paris 1979) 6.

will have made abundantly clear, my main purpose been to insist on the intrinsic importance of the oriental cults, and especially their mystery component, in the Principate. Nonetheless, if I am to round off the account, I do need to devote some attention to the problem of the typological similarities between them and the early Christianities.[3]

1. The Problems

> In jedem Betracht lege ich . . . dem Christentum einen hohen, ja unter allen bekannten Religionen, den höchsten Wert bei, betrachte auch die religiöse Kultur der Griechen, insofern sie auf den Mysterien beruhte, als ziemlich gleichartig mit jenem, im öffentlichen Kultus aber als eine notwendige Vorstufe zu demselben.
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> F. Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (Leipzig 1810–12[1]) Introd.

Christian Apologists became aware of these similarities at a very early point, and it is their response that has largely directed modern discussion.[4] Determined from the outset to defend the originality of their religion, they attempted to monopolise the terms of any possible debate. Since then, the question has been understood in many different ways and pursued with many different arguments. The issue of the similarities between Christianity and the oriental cults has thus developed way beyond the original issues, both as regards time-scale and content. Sometimes argument has ceded to *a priori* conviction.[5] In trying to make sense of the situation, we have to work with the information provided by the Early Church: whatever their motives, the Apologists did provide us with some scraps of authentic material,

[3] See the various essays in Alvar, Blázquez et al. 1995. I am most grateful to Clelia Martínez Maza for discussion on the material of this chapter (Martínez and Alvar 1997 pursues the issues in a rather different direction). My approach here also owes much to discussions with Elena Muñiz Grijalvo.

[4] Cf. Witt 1966; also C. Colpe, Die Mithrasmysterien und die Kirchenväter, in W. den Boer et al. (eds.), *Romanitas et Christianitas: Studia J.H. Waszink* (Amsterdam 1973) 29–43. L.H. Martin, Roman Mithraism and Christianity, *Numen* 36 (1989) 2–15 is unfortunately of little value.

[5] Cf. for example L. Bouyer, *Mysterion. Du mystère à la mystique* (Paris 1986). Despite having been translated into English (Edinburgh 1990), this book is tendentious and quite innocent of the distinctions and subtleties that have accumulated over the course of such a protracted discussion.

even if we now understand that it has to an unknowable extent been distorted and reinterpreted to suit the context of whatever wider claim they happened to be pursuing.

Historically, much of the argument has revolved around the comparison, at first formal, later structural, between the oriental cults and Christianity. In their eagerness to confute those who thought they could see certain similarities between the two, many older writers (followed by contemporary fundamentalists) highlighted only those that would allow them to affirm the uniqueness of Christianity. In so doing, they overlooked the fact that there were other unique institutions, namely these very cults of Cybele, Isis and Mithras. In their hurry to defend the image of an original and uncontaminated Christianity, such scholars failed to note the irrationality of what they were about. In order to investigate a given historical reality, historical method demands the use of certain logical tools, among them comparison, that is, the systematic formulation of analogies, which make it possible to specify the main features or characteristics, and on this basis to contextualise the topic within an explicit framework. To deny that Christianity has anything in common with other cults of the Roman Empire (which even the Apologists acknowledged) is to refuse the entire logic of the taxonomic process and its epistemological value. It is simply another version of the angel's command to stop thinking.

The search for difference has in turn prompted the realisation that the category 'oriental cults' is itself by no means a seamless whole. If the Christianities have their own specificity, so do each of the cults of Cybele, Isis and Mithras. The process of coming to understand the contrasts and differences between the three of them, and, as is increasingly being realised, even within each individual cult, makes the phenomenon of the mystery component of these cults all the more interesting.[6] The praxis and belief of the educated adherent were different from those of the uneducated; shifts and changes came with geographical expansion and the lapse of time. Our view of the whole

[6] Cf. Engster 2002. One issue I have skirted is that of miracle or marvel: reports of miraculous divine interventions are well-known in the cult of Isis and Serapis, mainly thanks to the papyrus documents found in Egypt; they are virtually absent from the cults of Cybele and Mithras, each of which has a very different evidential base. Yet reports of miracle and marvel pullulate in early Christian contexts, above all in the apocryphal New Testament (where Jesus' miracles are completely ignored): P.J. Achtermeier, Jesus and the Disciples as Miracle Workers in the Apocryphal New Testament, in Schüssler Fiorenza 1976, 149–86.

must accommodate such differences, while acknowledging that all professed to follow this or that divinity. That is the value of the notion of an historically dynamic system of beliefs. The trouble with grand narratives, and the grand generalisations that tend to sustain them, is that they deny internal difference, and prefer to deal in the coinage of holistic Belief or Fact. It is by no means clear that the understanding offered by such generalisations can ever compensate for the distortions inherent in their very formulation.[7] The basic point is that we should not be content with dominant views here (any more than anywhere else). If we are, we shall be condemned to repeat what has already been thought and said. It is thus essential to look at the historiography of the topic in order to arrive at an understanding of how the problems have been constructed. And at the same time we need to remain conscious of our own methodological presuppositions if we are to come up with alternative questions. Excellent work has now been done along these lines.[8]

Some Christian writers recognised that individual rituals featuring in the oriental cults preceded their own religion. Temporal priority however strongly suggested a model of uni-directional transfer, a conclusion so unwelcome that it could be avoided only by desperate remedies. Thus Justin in the mid-second century developed the argument that the Devil, knowing in advance how the rites of the true religion would turn out, created a parody of them in the mysteries in order to confuse humankind.[9] The fact that the mysteries were there first is not denied;

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[7] Note here the dogmatic remarks of A.D. Nock: "The truth is that among the so-called Oriental mystery-religions Christianity was the only one which was a religion in the sense of having cohesion and dogma and the only one which was Oriental in its nature in spite of the fact that it was less Oriental and exotic in its trappings, having no comparable heritage of ritual" (1933b, 136).

[8] E.g. Smith 1990; Bremmer 2006.

[9] ἐπὶ ἀπατῇ καὶ ἀπαγωγῇ τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου γένους: *1Apol.* 52; parallel between lustration and baptism: ibid. 62; between the Eucharist and Mithraic bread and water: ibid. 66. The same themes appear in *Dial. Tryph.*; cf. A.Y. Reed, The Trickery of the Fallen Angels and the Demonic Mimesis of the Divine: Aetiology, Demonology, and Polemics in the Writings of Justin Martyr, *JECS* 12.2 (2004) 141–71. The case of Justin is particularly interesting since he was the first Christian writer to confront the issue of religious contact from a philosophical point of view, later abandoned by the Apologetic tradition. He was splendidly equipped by background and education to undertake the defence of Christianity, having been born into a pagan family of Samaria. He thus knew a good deal about Judaism (cf. *Dial Tryph.* 70.4), without feeling attracted to it. As a young man he studied Plato, but was converted to Christianity by proselytisers after expressing his admiration of the Stoics (2*Apol.* 12). He later moved to Rome and founded a philosophical school. One of his prominent pupils was Tatian, who tells us

but playing the devil's ace allows Justin to commute the admission into a celebration of the superiority of Christianity. This puerile solution, which one can find endlessly repeated in Apologetic and later Christian literature,[10] forms part of an entire strategy aimed at discrediting the pagan divinities in general, and those of the oriental cults in particular, by claiming that they were all mere demons. They were first reduced to the status of δαίμονες, subaltern spirits, and then caricatured as the moral inverse of God.[11]

Similar arguments, if such they can be called, were invoked by Christian Apologetic literature to explain the similarities between the rituals of the oriental cults and their own form of worship, and exaggerate the admittedly sharp differences between them. Modern scholars have largely taken over these accounts, and regularly drawn on Christian sources to fill the gaping lacunae in the source-material. The result has been the creation of a largely fictitious account that makes it appear as though we had a tolerably good knowledge of these cults' systems

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that Justin was denounced as a Christian by a Cynic opponent and condemned to death (*Discourse* 19). Justin's work was addressed to Antoninus Pius, thus making clear that he was hoping to reach educated people and Greek-speaking intellectuals, whom he vainly attempted to convince of the groundlessness of the charges against Christianity (1*Apol.*) and the terrible consequences of denunciations and accusations (2*Apol.*). See L.W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr* (Cambridge 1967); E.F. Osborn, *Justin Martyr* (Tübingen 1973); T.G. Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr and the Mosaic Law* (Cambridge MA 1975); T.G. Donner, *Justin Martyr. A Theology of History* (Cambridge 1982).

[10] Tertullian, *Praescr. haer.* (40.1–4) uses exactly the same argument: *Sed quaeritur a quo intellectus interpretetur eorum quae ad haereses faciant? A diabolo scilicet, ciuus sunt partes intervertendi veritatem, qui ipsas quoque res sacramentorum divinorum idolorum mysteriis aemulatur. Tingit et ipse quosdam utique credentes et fideles suos; expositionem delictorum de lavacro repromittit: et si adhuc memini Mithrae, signat illic in frontibus milites suos. Celebrat et panis oblationem, et imaginem resurrectionis inducit et sub gladio redimit coronam* (= Sanzi 2003, 413f.: Mithras no. 5.2). We find it still being used two centuries later by 'Ambrosiaster', *Quaest. vet. nov. test.* 94.11f.; 145.4–15 etc. The same sleight of hand was used to account for the apparent analogies between Christianity and the indigenous American religions encounterd by the Spanish missionaries, for example D. Durán, who claimed that the Devil had compelled the Indios to imitate Catholicism *avant la lettre* (Csapo 2005, 12). On the other hand, diabolic intervention is the thrust of the unusual book by A. Julián, *Monarquía del Diablo en la gentilidad del Nuevo Mundo Americano*, transcribed and introduced by M. Germán Romero (Santa Fé de Bogota 1994).

[11] F. Cumont, La polémique de l'Ambrosiaster contre les païens, *RHLR* 8 (1903) 417–436; J. Pépin, Réactions du christianisme latin à la sotériologie métroaque. Firmicus Maternus, Ambrosiaster, S. Augustin, in Bianchi and Vermaseren 1982, 256–272; Sfameni Gasparro 1983; P. Franco Beatrice, *L'intolleranza cristiana nei confronti dei pagani* (Bologna 1990). For the early stages of the controversy, M. Fédou, *Christianisme et religions païennes dans le "Contre Celse" d'Origène* (París, 1988); on the role of Arnobius and his relative originality compared with Clement of Alexandria: Mora 1994.

of beliefs. Yet the practice of lumping together quite different sorts of evidence makes it impossible to discover whether there were any similarities between them and the Christianities, and, if so, how they came about. Once this ideological work had been done, the basic task naturally enough seemed to be to discover the true givers and takers, and gauge the degree of dependence of the one upon the other. The only rational approach is that outlined by Wedderburn: "It would be surprising if the competing claims of Christianity had had no impact upon the mystery-religions, nor is it likely that Christianity was never influenced by the beliefs of these cults. But the question is how early" (1982, 822).

At the end of the nineteenth century, the comparative method was the special tool devised by the Protestant Religionsgeschichtliche Schule, whose central figure was Wilhelm Bousset at the University of Göttingen, to establish affinities between different religions and make it possible to proceed with morphological and phenomenological analysis and classification.[12] This method, one of whose later notable practitioners was Rudolf Bultmann, was supposed to provide a more solid basis on which to contextualise Christianity in relation to what was then termed 'late Judaism' (i.e. the folk-Judaism of the Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha) and Hellenistic religious developments, above all 'Erlösungsreligiosität', the religious longing for redemption as a special form of salvation.[13] Included in this category were of course the oriental cults, whose characteristic feature was belief in a god who died and was resurrected, a transition or passage that underwrote the salvation of

[12] See briefly Hartenstein et al. 2004; also H. Paulsen, Traditionsgeschichtliche Methode und Religionsgeschichtliche Schule, *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 75 (1978) 20–55 at 45–53; G. Lüdemann (ed.), *Die 'Religionsgeschichtliche Schule': Facetten eines theologischen Umbruchs* (Frankfurt a.M. 1996); H.G. Kippenberg, *Die Entdeckung der Religionsgeschichte* (Munich 1997) 163–78 (with acute points about the relation between the Göttingen notion of syncretism and the antisemitism of the Kaiserreich); W. Gerlings, Die θεῖος—ἀνήρ Vorstellung der 'Religionsgeschichtlichen Schule' und ihre Kritik, in G. Binder, B. Effe and R.F. Glei (eds.), *Gottmenschen: Konzepte existentieller Grenzüberschreitung in Altertum.* Bochumer altertumswissenschaftiches Colloquium 55 (Trier 2003) 121–31. Bousset attracted a number of sympathisers in Classical Philology, especially Richard Reitzenstein and P. Wendland, while there were looser, and still largely unexplored, connections to the schools of Hermann Usener in Bonn, U. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf in Berlin and F.J. Dölger in Münster. The *RGG* itself came into being under the influence of the movement, and has as a result always been strongly Protestant and comparativist in orientation.

[13] The influence of Göttingen here on Max Weber, especially via Ernst Troeltsch, will not go unnoticed.

the adherents of the cult. "Das Christentum erschien in diesem Licht als synkretistische Religion, als Produkt historischer Entwicklung, dessen Eigenbegrifflichkeit auf den modernen Betrachter zunächst fremd wirkt" (Hartenstein et al. 2004, 322).

There had of course been earlier attempts along the same lines. The most famous of these is that of the Calvinist minister Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614), whose *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes* was published in London in 1614. He set out to explain the entire sacramental system of Roman Catholicism as a derivation from specific practices within the mystery cults, which would in turn justify the Reformation. His target was the great *Annales Ecclesiastici* of the Vatican librarian Cardinal Cesare Baronio (1538–1607), the well-researched and very detailed 'official' Catholic history published in twelve folio volumes over the two decades 1588–1607.[14] One of the central themes of intra-Christian polemic was thus created: the oriental mysteries were instrumentalised in order to discredit one's opponents in a dispute that really had nothing to do with them. The Roman Church had arisen out of the rubble of paganism, so that it was imperative to get back to the limpid Word and try to recover Christ's original message, his *ipsissima verba*. Quite apart from the opportunities for new types of disputes that this claim opened up, the danger here lay in suggesting that Christianity as a whole, not merely Catholicism, might be tributary to the oriental cults' systems of belief. This was the very thought that the early Christian apologists had found so uncomfortable.[15]

It is hardly surprising that the intellectual ferment occasioned by the French Revolution revived this seventeenth-century discussion. Here however the battle-lines were drawn differently, the theme being the conflict between reason and the various forms of irrationality. It was in this context that C.F. Dupuis, as we have seen, published his massive *Origine de tous les cultes* (Paris 1795), where, like some late-Enlightenment Eratosthenes, he defended that thesis that all myths were essentially astronomical. He thus ended up by identifying all those he took to be versions of the same god Sol as a single deity (§II.1). Moreover, not

[14] Baronio was himself commissioned to write the work by S. Philip Neri as a replique to the famous Protestant (Philippist) history, the *Ecclesiastica Historia* (*Magdeburg Centuries*) in 13 vols., by many hands (1559–74).

[15] On all this, see J. Alvar and C. Martínez Maza, Los "misterios" en la controversia católico-protestante, in *Fundamentalismo político religioso: De la Antigüedad a la Edad Moderna. II Coloquio Internacional del grupo europeo Religión, Poder, Monarquía* (Castellón 2003) 147–167.

only did he lump Christianity in the same category (§III.1), he suggested that Mithras and Christ were one and the same divinity.[16] Casaubon thus merely fingered Pandora's box; Dupuis tried to break it open. Catholics and Protestants, irreconcilable enemies, found themselves suddenly on the same side against an opponent who not only accepted the Reformation claim that Roman-Catholic ritual was basically borrowed from paganism but questioned the originality of its entire belief-system by arguing that the contents of the Christian message were the same as those of earlier cults.

The analytical advances of the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule did little either to resolve the doubts excited by the controversy as it rumbled on or to establish a consensus among its members, who, coming from diverse cultural backgrounds, of course had different ideological presuppositions. Interpretations varied from author to author. The main aim seems to have been to avoid the problem by not engaging with it, or getting round it as Frazer had done. Two members of the school did however openly confront the topic of Christianity's debts to its cultural context. The first was Richard Reitzenstein (1862–1931), who used the analysis of key terms as a means of defining shared semantic fields in order to sustain the claim that the mysteries did indeed influence Christianity.[17] The other was Albrecht Dieterich (1866–1908), who discovered what he saw as close parallels to Pauline thought in the heavenly ascent described in the so-called 'Mithras liturgy', discussed in the previous chapter. For all that, they failed to construct a better theory about how the relationship was to be understood. Alfred Loisy (1857–1940), one of those most firmly convinced that Christianity had arisen out of the context of the mystery religions, tended unfortunately to superficiality and overstatement, which made him an easy target for Franz Cumont, who remained the dominant figure in this area for half a century.[18] Cumont tried to avoid confusing the issue with essentially

[16] He suggests the following scenario: the solar deity of the equinox in Taurus, tauroctonous Mithras, becomes the solar deity of the equinox in Aries, symbolised by the sacrifice of a lamb (= Christ, likewise reduced to a sidereal allegory). The snake introduces evil into the world (= winter), while the redemption of man is simply the triumphant annual return of spring: *Abrégé de l'origine*… (Paris 1830, 16).

[17] R. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres* (Leipzig 1904); idem 1927.

[18] The longest statement of Loisy's views is Loisy 1930, but the ideas can already be seen in his article 1911–12, 51, cited by Smith 1990, 42f. On Loisy see now F. Laplanche, I. Biagioli and C. Langlois (eds.), *Alfred Loisy cent ans après. Autour d'un petit livre. Actes du Colloque International tenu à Paris les 23–24 Mai, 2003* (Turnhout 2007).

Christian debates. His position, which became canonical, was that the oriental cults, and their mystery-component in particular, pre-existed the arrival of Christianity; and that their success was a necessary preliminary to its ultimate victory. In other words, he held to the traditional theme of the *praeparatio evangelica*.

The earlier debate had however already created significant opposition to these claims. Doubts were aired about the very validity of comparative research, and *a fortiori* about the claim that there were detailed analogies between Christianity and the mysteries. From the point of view of the Roman Catholic church, the central point was that Christianity is unique and cannot be compared with any other historical experience. Such similarities as there might be between its rituals and those of the mysteries were simply of no interest. Protestant historiography however took up the challenge offered by the Schule, once again as a means of defining its own difference. Now the claim was that there were indeed some similarities in the rituals, though not in the basic beliefs; these similarities were read as evidence for the 'paganisation' of early Christianity, such that the pristine purity of belief could only be recovered by returning to the Gospel message. Christ's message remained intact as the original, unique revelation, whereas the Roman Catholic church had failed Christianity by allowing it to become sullied by paganism.[19]

Three basic positions thus came into being: non-confessionals who tried to fit Christianity into the context of the mystery religions; Protestants who accepted an original difference that became obscured in the course of the third century AD; and the 'Papists', who instrumentalised the debate to demonstrate the unconditional independence and originality of Christianity. In order to ground their claims, the participating Christians set about dismantling Frazer's category of the 'dying and rising gods' so that Christ would no longer fit.[20] It was the message itself that revealed the difference between salvation in Christ and the promises of salvation supposedly made by the gods of the mysteries. The other difference that was emphasised was the contrast

[19] J.A. Faulkner, Did Mystery Religions Influence Apostolic Christianity?, *The Methodist Quarterly Review* 73 (1924) 387–403; idem, Did Ancient Christianity Borrow from the Mystery Religions?, *The Methodist Quarterly Review* 74 (1925) 266–278, cf. the discussion by Smith 1990, 44f.

[20] Much to the distress of W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings to Irenaeus* (Nashville 1970, orig. ed. Gothenberg 1921) 188ff., whose protests were loud but ineffectual.

between the historical figure of Christ and the mythical nature of the oriental mystery-gods.[21]

In my view, however, all this was simply making a mountain out of a mole-hill. For in themselves these hotly-debated issues were of minimal importance. Nevertheless even the tiniest detail was discussed with such a show of erudition as to discourage outsiders from intervening. The topic was academic in the bad sense: it became an arena of choice, where a handful of initiates could pose one another clever questions. It was not at all a problem of wider interest that invited people to reflect upon from different points of view.[22]

The best point of entry is perhaps once again to take the three themes that have provided the main structure of this book. If the dearth of relevant information has throughout been a constant complaint, the problem is still greater as regards the relation between Christianity and the oriental cults, especially their mystery-component. The real difficulty concerns not so much the dearth of evidence as its nature and quality. The archaeology and epigraphy are wretched enough, but the literary evidence is disastrous. Theoretically, one might perhaps compensate for this asymmetry by using analogies from Christianity, which is better documented. If we were to do so, however, we would soon come up with the discovery that the oriental mysteries borrowed from Christianity. Such a methodological error could easily be compounded

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[21] G. Brückner, *Der sterbende und auferstehende Gottheiland in den orientalischen Religionen und ihr Verhältnis zum Christentum* (Tübingen 1908) 48. Likewise in defence of the historical character of Christianity as a distinctive feature: Angus 1929, 85; E. Bevan, *Holy Image: an Inquiry into Idolatry and Image—Worship in Ancient Paganism and in Christianity* (London 1940) 44; G.C. Ring, Christ's Resurrection and the Dying and Rising Gods, *CBQ* 6 (1944) 216–229 at 229; M. Simon, Remarques sur la sotériologie du Nouveau Testament, in S.G. Brandon (ed.), *The Saviour God. Comparative Studies in the Concept of Salvation presented to E.O. James* (Manchester 1963) 145. Loisy expressed his unhappiness about this trend already in 1911–12, 52: "The Christian myth is no more a fact than the pagan myths". I owe many of these citations to Clelia Martínez.

[22] This highly technical debate over terms, mainly those employed in Paul's *Epistles*, was almost completely factitious, since it is hardly likely that, aside from their belief, Christian writers could have cut themselves off from all linguistic influence from outside, cf. Smith 1990, 54ff. ('On comparing words'). It nevertheless dragged on interminably. Two examples, one on each side, might be F.V. Filson, *The New Testament against its Environment* (London 1950); E. Wynne-Tyson, *Mithras. The Fellow in the Cap* (London 1958) (who, with more enthusiasm than sense, claimed that Mithraism influenced the writings of the New Testament). By contrast, the most recent work on this subject, e.g. N.T. Wright, *Paul: Fresh Perspectives* (London 2005) or B.J. Malina and J.J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul* (Minneapolis 2006), simply omits any reference to pagan mysteries and stresses Paul's knowledge of current Jewish theological trends.

by others. We might for example assume that contact between the different systems led to a series of correlative internal changes. It would then be an easy matter to select individual elements and juxtapose them against formally similar elements of the opposite system in such a way that the hypothetical borrowing becomes a fact.[23]

2. The Sub-system of Belief

> Des resemblances ne supposent pas nécessairement une imitation, et les similitudes d'idées ou de pratiques doivent s'expliquer, en dehors de tout emprunt, par une communauté d'origine.
>
> Cumont 1929, p. x

The similarities at the level of belief-systems generally concern those that offend, used to offend, or might again offend Christian sensibilities. With the passage of time, the similarities once claimed to exist between the passion and death of Osiris or Attis and Christ seem unconvincing from the narratological point of view, but the example can help us investigate the various factors involved in making such claims. At the conceptual level, the problem was to decide whether Christ was a 'dying and rising god'.[24] There were of course two views on this, each supported by arguments. It is obvious however that the decision as to whether Christ was or was not one of these gods was a subjective matter that really had nothing to do with the considerations adduced. Methodologically speaking, what is striking is the number of studies that attacked the idea of dying and rising gods *tout court* instead of tackling

[23] To illustrate the way in which similarities are made to appear by means of forced parallels we can take the example of Randall 1970, 105, where he asserts that Mithraism "introduced the festival of the Winter solstice, Christmas; it had its myths of the Magi, and the Divine Star" (the Internet is a marvellous source for such fabulous certainties, which seem largely to be inspired by Cumont); or we might think of A.B. Cook's claim that the Metroac pine-tree is assimilable to the Cross: 1925, 1: 303. We might also refer to the approach of S. Laeuchli, Christ and Mithra, in idem 1967, 85–105, with its belief, then very widespread in NT circles, in the religious bankruptcy of Rome and the idea that there was an 'institutionalised' Mithraism—which he probably got from Vermaseren's invention of a Mithraic *suovetaurilia* at S. Prisca. The methodological problem is well discussed once again by Smith 1990, who divides his account of comparison there into three: the level of words, of narratives and facts, and of contexts.

[24] Cf. J. Weiss, *Earliest Christianity: A History of the Period AD 30–150* (New York 1914, repr.1959) 638.

the issue directly. The implicit assumption was evidently that, if the category could be made to disintegrate, the original problem would go away of its own accord.[25] Such efforts often involved the construction of complicated definitions intended to winkle out minute differences. My own position here is largely that of J.Z. Smith: in most circumstances, it is a mistake in method to invoke a genetic relation in order to explain beliefs common to two systems (1990, 46ff.).

Some scholars have indeed continued to think the connections must have been deeper, and have wanted to find the key in the expression 'dying and rising gods', interpreted not as 'gods who die and then come to life again' but as 'gods of death and resurrection'. I would say that the deaths and resurrections of Osiris and Attis have to be understood contextually. That is, these are not universal or transparent notions, so that the discussion ought to focus on the emphasis laid in the different systems on the nature and ends of the divine mission.[26] The god's redemptive power, and the type of salvation that can be obtained by individual effort, must therefore be the main criteria of difference. Access to these themes is through language (i.e. the level of belief) and certain rituals (the level of praxis).

There is a vast literature on the language of the oriental mysteries and Christianity, largely provoked by the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule. Positions here can be placed on a continuum between two poles, represented at the one end by the claim that Christianity, being a revealed religion, is unique,[27] and at the other by the assumption

[25] There is a legendary attempt at demolition of the entire category by K. Prümm, s.v. Mystery, in J.B. Bauer (ed.), *Sacramentum Verbi. An Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology*, *2* (New York 1970) 606, who claimed that it was simply a product of the modern imagination; as though modern ideas had no value in understanding the past. The very heat of his indignation makes the modern imagination in its turn suspect that there was more here than met the eye. As I pointed out in the Introduction, the encyclopedia article by J.Z. Smith (Smith 1987) did indeed close down discussion of Frazer's concept for a quarter-century, until the issue was raised again by Mettinger 2001, followed by Casadio 2003. For an able defence of Smith's position, though written before Mettinger's book appeared, see M.S. Smith, The Death of "Dying and Rising Gods" in the Biblical World: An Update, with Special Reference to Baal in the Baal Cycle, *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 12.2 (1998) 257–313.

[26] So Metzger 1955, 15f., in his résumé of the debate, followed by e.g. Wiens 1980, 1277. The expression is puzzling, since the whole point is that these gods, unlike Jesus, did not accept their death voluntarily. Moreover, Jesus' resurrection was, according to the Gospel accounts, of an entirely different order (see p. 26f. above). Quite apart from that, such issues pale into insignificance by comparison with the main question, which is whether the mysteries contain analogies to Christianity.

[27] E.g. K. Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery* (New York 1971) 28.

that there was a very high degree of overlap (Paul created Christian vocabulary; Paul borrowed heavily from the language of the mysteries). Paul's *Epistles* do contain a number of interesting examples of terms shared with the mysteries, which were paraded up and down by the History of Religions school as irrefutable instances of borrowings by the primitive Church.[28] We have seen for example that initiation was considered a form of death that gave access to salvation. There is no finer expression of this mystic connection than Paul's words:

> συνετάφημεν οὖν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον, ἵνα ὥσπερ ἠγέρθη Χριστὸς ἐκ νεκρῶν διὰ τῆς τοῦ πατρός, οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν.[29]
>
> *Rom.* 6.4

Reitzenstein thought that Pauline words such as *pneuma* or *gnosis* were evidence of borrowings from the mysteries; Dieterich claimed (on the basis of his fourth-century 'Mithras-liturgy') that there were parallels between Pauline and Mithraic language.[30] Others were more cautious, which in turn influenced the more critical views of A.D. Nock, who with some subtlety claimed that there were indeed shared discursive

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[28] Paul's use of such language has been explained by appeal to his close contacts with the Christian groups in Asia Minor, where mystery cults were supposedly two a penny, cf. H.R. Willoughby, The New-Birth Experience in Pauline Christianity and Contemporary Religions: a Genetic Study in Pauline Mysticism, *Abstracts of Theses* (Chicago 1926) 458. The *Epistles* have been examined minutely from this point of view by Randall 1970, 55–156, where he makes the same point about Ignatius of Antioch. There is a useful summary of opinions on this theme in M. Simon, The Religionsgeschichtliche Schule fifty years later, *Religious Studies* 11 (1975) 130–45. On the other hand, many have doubted whether Paul was deeply immersed in any cultural context apart from Judaism (cf. Wiens 1980, 1263ff.; Wedderburn 1982). But any simple antithesis between 'Hellenistic'and 'Jewish' is itself now seen as problematic: H.-D. Betz, Transferring a Ritual: Paul's Interpretation of Baptism in Romans 6, in Engberg-Pedersen 1994, 84–179 (a masterly analysis). B.J. Malina and J.H. Neyrey, *Portraits of Paul: an Archaeology of Ancient Personality* (Louisville KY 1996) and R. Wallace and W. Williams, *The Three Worlds of Paul of Tarsus* (London 1998) rightly stress the cultural complexity of Paul's world; and nowadays primacy is accorded the Jewish context (cf. n. 21 ad fin.)

[29] "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (AV); cf. Tertullian, *De resurr. carnis* 47.28: *Per simulacrum enim morimur in baptismate, per veritatem resurgimus in carne, sicut et Christus*; and later, Augustine, *Serm.* 2.7.23.

[30] Reitzenstein: see n. 17 above; Dieterich 1903 with Betz 2003. Betz explores the language of the 'Liturgy' with the help of *TNTW*, but there is evidently very little positive overlap between these linguistic worlds.

themes but treated them in such a way as to protect the ideological claim to the originality of Christianity.[31]

Some slight movement occurred when scholars thought of looking at the linguistic usage not only of the mysteries but also of Judaism.[32] Even if this approach did not lead very far, it at least helped to shift attention away from the fateful dyad.[33] The most disputed term of all was of course μυστήριον. It certainly occurs in the Septuagint, but that does not guarantee that Paul's use of it derives from the Old Testament (Smith 1990, 62ff.). Classical writers use the word in the plural, whereas in primitive Christianity μυστήριον is used in the singular, to refer to a progressively-divulged divine 'secret', unique, unrepeatable and of universal value.[34] But such facts implied no conclusion about reception, debts, overlaps, or traditions. There is also the well-known, indeed notorious, fact that the Gospels are quite irrelevant here, since their lexis differs so markedly from Paul's: it is the latter's choice of words that, being so very Hellenising, has seemed most to resemble that of the mysteries.[35]

The mere fact that individual terms appear both in early Christianity and in the mysteries does not therefore by any means necessarily imply a similarity in denotation or content, let alone a direct debt in either direction. Equally, it is impossible to show that the terms are completely independent of one another. It has long been understood that in order to frame or express its theological, liturgic and doctrinal ideas Christianity made, had to make, extensive use in its formative phase of the religious language already established in its cultural environment.[36] To have

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[31] Caution: P. Gardner, *The Religious Experience of St. Paul* (London 1911); L. Kirsopp Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of Paul* (London 1911); H.A.A. Kennedy, *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions* (London 1913); Nock: idem, Hellenistic Mysteries and Christian Sacraments, *Mnemosyne*[4] 5 (1952) 188–214 at 203 (repr. Nock 1962, 109–45 at 133).

[32] A.D. Nock, Mysterion, *HSCPh* 60 (1951) 201–05.

[33] So Wiens 1980 (though for the most part I find this piece very one-sided); on the importance of Philo as a mediator, Wedderburn 1982, 828f.

[34] It was E.R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven and London 1935) who made the obvious point, that the antecedents to Paul's thinking, here as elsewhere, lay in the type of Hellenistic-Jewish speculation known to us through Philo of Alexandria, cf. A.D. Nock's review in *Gnomon* 13 (1937) 156–65.

[35] On Paul's version of Christianity see R.E. Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term 'Mystery' in the New Testament* (Philadelphia 1968); more recently, A.F. Segal, *Paul, the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven 1990); E. Sanders, *Paul* (Oxford 1991); D. Boyarin, *Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley 1994); J.G. Gager, *Re-inventing Paul* (New York 2000).

[36] Nock 1939, 444; R.M. Wilson, *The Gnostic Problem: a Study of the Relations between Hellenistic Judaism and the Gnostic Heresy* (London 1959) 258; F.A. Regan, Dies Dominica

attempted to create an entirely new set of terms would not only have been problematic and difficult, it would have been counter-productive, since no one would have understood what the Christians were trying to say. Both linguistic economy and the demands of communicability required the appropriation of existing terminology. It also made it easier to explain how Christianity differed from the competition. We only have to look at a passage from Clement of Alexandria, filled with allusions to Euripides' *Bacchae*, to appreciate that some Christians at any rate were perfectly aware of this:

> Come, madman, not leaning on the thyrsus, not crowned with ivy; throw away the mitre, throw away the fawn-skin; come to your senses. I will show you the Word, and the mysteries of the Word, expounding them after your own fashion. This is the mountain beloved of God, not the subject of tragedies like Cithaeron, but consecrated to dramas of the truth—a mountain of sobriety, shaded with forests of purity; and there revel on it (βακχεύουσι) not the Maenads, the sisters of Semele, who was struck by the thunderbolt, practising in their initiatory rites unholy *sparagmos* (αἱ δύσαγνον κρεανομίαν μυούμεναι), but the daughters of God, the fair lambs, who celebrate the holy rites of the Word, raising a sober choral dance.
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> *Protr.* 12.1 = 119.1–2 p. 172 Marcovich[37]

An example such as this suggests how deeply Christian language was suffused with pre-existing religious terminology, whether Christians admitted it or not; yet the real point, as far as they were concerned, was that they were advocating an entirely new religious discourse.

Let me conclude this discussion with an illustration from ritual. *Acts* 18.18 reads:

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and Dies Solis. *The Beginnings of the Lord's Day in Christian Antiquity* (Washington 1960) 75. On the role of cultural context in the formation of Christianity, note B.J. Malina, *The New Testament World. Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville 2001). It is a sign of how much things have changed in this field that he does not discuss mystery cults at all.

[37] tr. Anon., Ante-Nicene Fathers (American ed.), vol. 2, p. 205 (adapted). The point here is simply to draw attention to the phenomenon of the 'vehicle' of religious expression. In the context of the mysteries themselves, I would say that the persistence of Greek terms in the Latin-speaking West tells us more about the nature of the religious content requiring to be communicated than about identity. The persistence of Latin in the Roman Catholic Church up to Vatican II is clearly related to this issue; it was already the subject of extensive discussion at the time of the evangelisation of the Americas, cf. J. Alvar 1993b, 23ff.

> ὁ δὲ Παῦλος ἔτι προσμείνας ἡμερὰς ἱκανὰς τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ἀποταξάμενος ἐξέπλει εἰς τὴν Συρίαν, καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ Πρίσκιλλα καὶ Ἀκύλας, κειράμενος ἐν Κειχρεαῖς τὴν κεφαλήν, εἶχεν γάρ εὐχήν.[38]

Now at Cenchreae, the busy southern port of Corinth, there was, as we saw in the previous Chapter, an important temple of Isis and Serapis (Apuleius, *Met.* 10.35). Of course I do not want to suggest that the shaven heads of Egyptian priests had anything to do with Paul: shaving one's head was a well-known Jewish practice marking the completion of a Nazarite vow.[39] Such a vow was taken by anyone, male or female, who wished to set himself apart, dedicate himself to God, for a period of time. During this period he was not allowed to drink wine or any other strong drink, nor consume any product of the grape, such as vinegar, sultanas, or even the pips; he could not shave, and had to let his hair grow; he could have no contact with death, even if a member of his own family should die:

> All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head. All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body.
>
> *Numbers* 6.6f.

Paul probably undertook this vow before starting out on his journey to Corinth; so far as we know, it could only be made in the Temple at Jerusalem.[40]

I believe the symbolic language employed here makes good sense. Paul was performing a Jewish vow, yet was outwith Jerusalem. The act of shaving his head is an infringement of the Law intended to demonstrate the universal reach of Christ's message. It helps to underline his Christian faith and his apostolic mission to the gentiles. In Cenchreae the act of shaving his head has a significance different from that it

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[38] "And Paul after this tarried there [i.e. in Corinth] yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow" (AV).

[39] Cf. Numbers 6.13: "And this is the law of the Nazarite, when the days of his separation are fulfilled: he shall be brought unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation" (AV); v. 18: "And the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall take the hair of the head of his separation, and put it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings" (AV).

[40] A. Pallis, *Notes on St. Luke and the Acts* (Oxford 1928) 71.

would have had in Jerusalem. At Cenchreae, Paul is substituting Christ for the goddess who protects navigation, just before his own voyage; by using not a pagan ritual but one from his own Jewish tradition he is proclaiming that faith in Christ, a Jew with a radical message, is superior to faith in the pagan gods he replaces. The point here, then, is not who borrowed what from whom, but the dialectical relationship set up between the various systems of belief at play here.

Before embarking on the issue of shared language, I observed that the god's redemptive power and the type of salvation that can be obtained by individual effort must count as the main criteria of difference. The question now is whether the shared language in fact expresses different conceptions in these areas. Like Christianity, the oriental cults built up their own views of this world and the world beyond in relation to the changing needs and aspirations of their constituencies. It will thus be obvious that in the case of language shared between them there can be no neutral, non-ideological terms. When Christians took over particular religious terms from their cultural environment they did so because these terms were appropriate to the problems they wanted to discuss. Concept and word cannot be separated; conversely, the word cannot be separated from its semantic field. But that is what Christians tried to do. The very intensity of their efforts to do so can only excite the observer's suspicion that they were really speaking the same language. But speaking the same language does not mean saying the same things in the same manner: the different mystery-cults said different things while speaking the same language. From this point of view, what distinguishes Christianity is once again the aim, not the matter. It was this that made the Christians so desperately eager to differentiate themselves from a context all the more hateful for bearing such a tiresome family resemblance to their own beliefs.[41] That at any rate was the position from Tertullian onwards; but in the mid-second century, I think, the aim—at least Justin's aim—was to emphasise the similarity between Christian and pagan belief, in order to avoid persecution.

As I have pointed out in the previous chapters, Christ's redemptive power cannot be regarded as *sui generis* since the gods of the oriental cults made a similar offer of setting their adherents free from a destiny to which they were otherwise subject. But what the Graeco-Roman

[41] On the interesting case of Jews and Christians who apparently felt there was nothing wrong with participating in civic post-sacrificial banquets, cf. Borgen 1994.

mysteries could not do was to free mankind from the peculiar Jewish conception of an original sin passed on from an original pair of human-beings to all mankind.[42] Nor could they offer the idea that the gates of heaven were open to all mankind thanks to the incarnation, death and resurrection of the one God. These specifically Christian beliefs marked a difference comparable to the differences between each of the oriental cults. But they too had gods whose passion showed human-beings the way to a blessed after-life. Moreover all these movements encouraged anxieties and fostered hopes quite foreign to traditional Roman religion, thus generating the needs they aspired to fulfil in a population familiar with the idea of multiple forms of religious practice all aimed at establishing and maintaining a variety of different lines of communication with the other world. Nor is it a coincidence that different movements of a similar kind appeared at a particular moment in Roman history. All were responses to needs or anxieties that developed in the early Empire, anxieties that created a specific religious atmosphere that such movements zealously exploited in their own interests.[43] Not so much an 'Age of Anxiety', then, as an age in which religion, as it levered out for itself a semi-independent, autonomous, place in the order of things, learned, like Orpheus, to pluck those strings that would most move those who heard, such that they would come to need and desire just these novel strains and lose their taste for others. So it was too that the gods themselves came during the course of the third century AD, and even more in the fourth, gradually to lose their taste for the blood of animals.[44]

We cannot therefore claim that the oriental cults conceived the problem of salvation in the same terms as did Christianity.[45] That would be methodologically unsound. On the other hand, to say that what differentiates Christianity from the oriental cults is its idea of redemption

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[42] The notion in the Pauline form is present in 2 *Baruch* and 4 *Esdras*. I am indebted to A. Piñero for this information.

[43] Cf. "The spread of the oriental cults and the spread of Christianity…were conditioned by common emotional needs and by a common *Weltbild*": Nock 1939, 445; also Dodds 1965; P.R.L. Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambidge MA and London 1978); A. Piñero, El marco religioso del cristianismo primitivo, in idem (ed.), *Orígenes del Cristianismo. Antecedentes y primero pasos* (Madrid 1991) 66f.: I. Sælid Gilhus 2006, 53–57.

[44] S. Bradbury, Julian's Pagan Revival and the Decline of Blood-sacrifice, *Phoenix* 49 (1995) 331–56; Stroumsa 2005, 105–44; Sælid Gilhus 2006, 138–60.

[45] S.G.F. Brandon, Salvation: Mithraic and Christian, *The Hibbert Journal* 56 (1957–58) 123–33.

is to exaggerate the difference.[46] It is certainly true that for redemption to carry its full force a second component had to be invented or re-invented, namely the idea of original sin. But both redemption and original sin are secondary compared with the deeper meaning of the Christian message, which is the offer of personal salvation literalised to the point of the resurrection of the physical body (pity the Quasimodos, compelled to endure their misshapen ugliness for all eternity).[47] And it is precisely the offer to each individual of a blessed future that Christianity shares with the mysteries.[48]

3. The Sub-system of Ethics

Turning now to my second sub-system, we can make out clear analogies in ethical tendencies, all of which turn out to be more specific in Christianity. There can be little doubt that Christianity presented itself as a force for moral renewal (Hopkins 1999, 78–104). Its main correlative aim was to disparage the morality subtended by traditional religion, which is why it picked on the easy, but wholly irrelevant, target of the behaviour of the gods in mythology. For its own part, Christianity demanded from its followers both privately and socially moderation and self-restraint, above all in the sexual area, but extending also to other types of personal relationship.[49] That is why they tried to eradicate two

[46] Some have argued however that contact with blood may itself have been redemptive, e.g. Sfameni Gasparro 1983. This theory however relies on a now exploded conception of the history of the *taurobolium* (see pp. 261–4 above).

[47] The Docetists and Gnostics of course rejected the idea of physical resurrection; in response, the 'orthodox' side rallied to it so energetically (e.g. Justin, *Dial. Tryph.* 45.4; 120.5; the 'Apostolic Fathers': 2 *Clement* 9.1–4; *Epist. Barnab.* 5.6; Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 8.28) that by mid-II^{p} the theme had become notorious among pagan intellectuals such as Celsus (ap. Origen, *Contra Cels.* 5.14). Athenagoras' work on the resurrection (which was written in the reign of M. Aurelius), like the rest of his production, apparently enjoyed little success, but he claimed to be opposing arguments adduced not only by the pagan intellectuals he is ostensibly addressing but also those of Christians, cf. B. Pouderon, Publique et adversaires du Traité sur la résurrection d'Athénagore d'Athènes, *VetChr* 24 (1987) 315–336. The theoretical underpinning provided by Tertullian's *De resurr. carnis*, which seems to show traces of Athenagoras' ideas, had more influence. For a full discussion see C.W. Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York 1995).

[48] It may have been misguided of Loisy to think that the Christian offer of salvation in the next world was borrowed from the mysteries, but his confessional opponents did no better in claiming the opposite.

[49] Cf. Celsus' famous criticism: '[he mocks] the race of Jews and Christians, comparing them all to a cluster of bats and ants coming out of a nest, or frogs holding

fundamental features of Roman culture, the amphitheatre and mixed bathing.[50] They were also opposed to figurative representation, from the plastic arts to decoration on the walls of ordinary houses, that is, the entire visual environment (Elsner 1995, 243–45). As a result of the 'Christian revolution', people's visual surroundings become duller.[51]

We are not in a position to decide how far this morality differed from that of the mysteries. One's immediate response would be that changes of this order were entirely due to Christian susceptibilities, but one or two qualifications may be in order. Social life only became relatively more drab after Christianity had become the state-religion. Before that, obviously, it had no power to effect evident changes in everyday life out of doors. But there are perhaps hints in the pre-Constantinian period of what was to come. It might at first sight seem impossible to compare Christian attitudes here with those of the mysteries because the idiom in which they were expressed was so different. But in this case too we might expect that they were moving in the same direction, a drift interrupted by the success of Christianity. For, just like the Christians, the mysteries were unwilling to admit worshippers who were not ready to submit to a clear change in their personal attitudes and behaviour. Their core ritual was an initiation whose object was to draw a line under the individual's old system of values, acquired through socialisation, and teach him a new set more in keeping with the god's conditions for the offer of salvation. This became a prize awarded by divine grace, seeing that the divinity had chosen those to be initiated, albeit with the tacit agreement of the individual. Here there was little difference between Christianity and the oriental cults, except insofar as the Pauline Epistles, for example 1*Thess*. (the oldest extant Chris-

council round a marsh, or worms assembling in some filthy corner, disagreeing with one another about which of them are the worse sinners' (Origen, *Contra Cels*. 4.23.1–6), with the comments of Sælid Gilhus 2006, 57–61.

[50] Tertullian, *De spect.* 12 and 19; Minucius Felix, *Octav*. 37.11; Arnobius, *Adv. nat.* 2.41; Prudentius, *In Symm*. 1.379ff., 2.1091ff.; Augustine, *Serm*. 199.3; Salvian, *De gubern. Dei* 6.31; John Chrysostom, *Catech.bapt.* 6.1 Wenger; cf. S. Rebenich, *Insania circi*. Eine Tertullianreminiszenz bei Hieronymus und Augustin, *Latomus* 53 (1994) 155–58. This is a mere selection: the fact that we can still find such denunciations in Salvian and John Chrysostom shows how hard the Church found it in this case to resist popular feeling. I thank C. Martínez Maza once again for these references.

[51] Cf. Hopkins 1999, 78ff. The remarks on laughter in Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.5.46 give us a good idea of the way that Christian moralists attempted to empty the fun out of life: Sælid Gilhus 1997, 60ff. It is probable however that they did not manage to impose quite the degree of lugubriousness that was apparently prevalent in the Geneva of the Calvinists.

tian text) and the gloss in 2*Cor*. 6.14–7.1, recommend that Christians should avoid mixing with non-Christians in order to avoid the resultant contamination. Despite these pious recommendations by mentors, however, it is certain that the process of Christian resocialisation could not have been very effective in these early days, and that consequently the true extent of personal reformation will have been as limited as in the case of the mysteries.[52] Just as in the case of Christian language, the theoretical moral demands were closely modelled on pagan rhetorics of conduct.[53] There was really no alternative.

Perhaps the most noticeable difference lies in the early-Christian emphasis on the community of believers as a true family, the new focus of socialisation made necessary after the break, real or longed for, with one's past life as a pagan.[54] The Christian pseudo- or substitute-family became a very powerful means of keeping converts together. It was in this context that the Pauline theories of the 'mystic unity' of believers, the 'mystic body', and the obligation of the members to practice fraternal love were developed.[55] There can be no doubt that this new family was extremely effective in re-orienting people's lives and in formulating the rules through which they lived out their separation from the 'normal' world.[56] The small groups of Mithraists may have functioned in a similar manner, but there is no relevant evidence about whether, or how, members might have been integrated into something comparable

[52] Meeks 1986, 126; H. Sigismund Nielsen, Men, Women and Marital Chastity: Public Preaching and Popular Piety at Rome, in J.T. Fitzgerald, T.H. Olbricht and L.M. White (eds.), *Early Christianity and Classical Culture. Comparative Studies in honor of A.J. Malherbe* (Leyden 2003) 323–42. The interpretation of the Christian evidence is disputed, cf. Boyarin 1999, 88. Basil, *De virgin. tuenda* 61 (Migne, *PG* 30, col. 769bc) remarks that many Christian women had confessed to him that they had made love to ?slave eunuchs because there was no fear of getting pregnant by them (cf. Brown 1988, 268).

[53] Meeks 1986, 127. If we only look at paganism in general, the contrast with Christianity seems striking. But if we concentrate on the mysteries, there are notable similarities.

[54] Meeks' view of resocialisation is attacked by A. Destro and M. Pesce, *Antropologia delle origini cristiane* (Rome and Bari 1997).

[55] Kelly 1989, 401ff. Jan Bremmer has recently argued for an adapted version of Rodney Stark's concept of Christian "religious capital"; he rightly includes "bonding and bridging" among the contributory factors (2006, 275–7).

[56] The pagan literature of II^{p} stresses the efforts made by Christians to steer clear of the rest of society: M.Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion* (Cambridge 1996) 49ff.; D. Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive: the Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Chico 1981) 65–80, wrongly in my view, argues that the élites in the pre-Constantinian period were as critical of the ethics of the oriental cults as of those of the Christians.

to a 'mystic body'. This latter notion seems to me one of several key institutions that help to explain the success of Christianity.[57]

As became clear in Chapter 3, we have little idea of the values inculcated by the oriental cults. Sex as always seems to have been a neuralgic point.[58] Each strove in its own way to control the choice of sexual relations and oppose the promiscuity that was freely imputed to the big, bad world beyond. Quite where this leaves the enormous mainstream didactic literature on female virtue is by no means clear.[59] Isis required a period of chastity from her devotees; Mithraism excluded women; as far as Cybele was concerned the finest offering was the testicles of those men who felt most drawn towards her. The oriental cults in fact favoured various forms of sexual continence, which on the one hand fitted neatly with certain non-standard currents in contemporary paganism and on the other anticipated the extreme self-denial advocated by some strands of Christianity. The Christians of course found themselves here with no alternative but indignantly to chase away their own pagan shadow.[60] At any rate, the first Christian text to concern itself with marital sex, Clement of Alexandria's *Paedagogus* Bk. 2, written at the end of the second century, draws both on the Old Testament and, to a degree, on pagan moral precepts. Much of what appears to be original to Christianity in this area was thus in fact

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[57] The John Templeton Foundation is trying to introduce the concept of "spiritual capital" here; cf. also B. Verter, Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu, *Sociological Theory* 21 (2003) 150–74. Bremmer is rather sceptical (2006, 277).

[58] Some interesting remarks here from the point of view of the sociology of religion, the sociology of medicine, and the problem of the social body, in B.S. Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory* (Oxford 1984) 60ff.; cf. D. Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1993).

[59] Cf. S. Dixon, *The Roman Mother* (London 1988); J.F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (London 1986); D.F. Sawyer, *Women and Religion in the First Christian Centuries* (London 1996).

[60] Let me here refer to Rousselle 1982, an excellent book that appeared before Foucault's (she discusses the new ascetic practices introduced by Christianity at pp. 167ff.); and two important books by V. Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of the Apocryphal Acts* (New York 1987); eadem, *Begotten Not Made: Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity* (Stanford 2000). Grubbs 1994 has questioned Peter Brown's stress on the break between Christian views of the body and those that came before (Brown 1988). Cf. G. Clarke, Bodies and Blood: the Late-Antique Debate on Martyrdom, Virginity and Resurrection, in D. Montserrat (ed.), *Changing Bodies, Changing Meanings: Studies in the Human Body in Antiquity* (London and New York 1998) 99–115; and D. Boyarin 1999, 87. Keith Hopkins alludes to the theme several times, in the end accepting that a number of pagan practices imply a morality not too different from Christianity (1999, 132; 146; 157; 163).

already present in pagan moral thinking. As Foucault says at the end of the introduction to *The Use of Pleasure*:

> I had to take into account everything, in these moralities, that seemed to have to do with the privileged status of the practices of the self and the interest that may have been accorded them; with the effort that was made to develop them, perfect them, and teach them; and with the debate that went on concerning them. Consequently, the question that is so often raised regarding the continuity (or break) between the philosophical moralities of antiquity and Christian morality had to be reformulated; instead of asking what were the code elements that Christianity may have borrowed from ancient thought, and what were those that it added in its own right, in order to define what was permitted and what forbidden within a sexuality assumed to be constant, it seemed more pertinent to ask how, given the continuity, transfer or modification of codes, the forms of self-relationship (and the practices of the self that were associated with them) were defined, modified, recast, and diversified (1985, 31f.).

4. The Sub-system of Ritual

In relation to values, then, it is hardly possible to go beyond vague generalities. In the case of rituals, however, the parallels, denounced already by the Apologists, are so well-known that they have generated debates as interminable as they are inconclusive, just as we saw in relation to beliefs—the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule has a great deal to answer for. Any number of alleged parallels and borrowings have been suggested, among the best-known being the daily rituals, forms of interaction with the deity, and the ordering of time according to the rhythms imposed by the liturgy. In general, we can say that, because such suggestions are hardly ever made by scholars expert in both fields, who are mostly conscious of detailed difference, they generally tell us more about the *a priori* position of the writer than about any actual historical process.

At the level of ritual, the main focus has of course been upon initiation.[61] It has for example been claimed that the religious content of baptism is analogous to that of initiatory rites. Quite apart from the late *taurobolium*, whose supposed similarity is, as we have seen, not

[61] Cf. P. Andrews, Pagan Mysteries and Christian Sacraments, *Studies* 47 (1958) 50–60; J.Z. Smith, Birth Upside Down or Rightside Up?, *History of Religions* 9 (1970) 281–303; I. Chirassi Colombo, Modalità dell'interpretatio cristiana di culti pagani, *Mondo Classico e cristianesimo* (Rome 1982) 38.

at all surprising since it is an entirely Christian fiction, Isiac ablutions have been seen as a formal precedent for baptism, and the anointing with vinegar as a precedent for Christian *signatio* (Firmicus Maternus, *De err.* 22.4). The Mithraic grades have been seen as antecedents of Christian sacramental bonds. At the level of interaction with the deity, it has been claimed that Christian prayer may be indebted to the mysteries.[62] One particularly implausible thought has been that the litanies to the Virgin are linked to Isiac aretalogies.[63] Of course there is a very general parallel between the hymnic recitation of the addressee's virtues, and the blessings she bestows on the believer, but a direct connection is surely out of the question.

Speech or utterance is perhaps a better instance: there probably is something—but only something—in the suggestion that one of the main differences between Christianity and paganism is the replacement of animal-sacrifice by a rhetoric of sacrifice and substitution.[64] We would however want to add a variety of reservations and additional reflections. One is that in Christianity all the elements of pagan sacrifice are present except the victim and its physical death. As a matter of fact, a similar allusiveness can already be found in the extensive Graeco-Roman use of offerings without blood (especially in the private

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[62] See the bibliography in Chap. 4 n. 86. A. Hamman, La prière chrétienne et la prière païenne, formes et différences, *ANRW* II.23.2 (1980) 1190–1247 is of no great value here, since the author fails to grasp the special nature of the oriental cults within the complex reality of paganism.

[63] The figure of the Virgin has of course been endlessly compared to the Mother Goddesses that emerged from 'the neolithic Holy Family' as P. Lévêque put it: *Bêtes, dieux et hommes. L'imaginaire des premières religions* (Paris 1985). Marian cult has also been compared with that of Astarte: M. Rosh, Astarté-Maria, *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* (Gotha 1888) 265; with the Cretan Divine Mother: A. Evans, *The Palace of Minos, 3* (London 1928) 227. From a confessional position, K. Prümm rejected all comparisons of this kind, regarding Mary as a specifically Christian innovation. In fact her cult developed very gradually (Kelly 1989, 491ff.), which might support such a view. On the other hand, Tran tam Tinh 1973 has emphasised the iconographical similarity of Isis with Horus-Harpocrates and the Virgin with Child; cf. G. Paterson Corrington, The Milk of Salvation: Redemption by the Mother in Late Antiquity and Early Christianity, *HThR* 82 (1989) 393–420 (a squib to enliven the discussion about salvation and gender). For the Mater Magna, Borgeaud 1996, 172–81 = 2004, 120–31, has noted the points of contact with the Virgin; there are surely few enough, once we take cognisance of the ambiguities and problems involved in defining the Virgin theologically and iconographically in a context where goddesses such as Isis and Cybele were visually and conceptually prominent. The conclusion must be that there are no clear links of any sort between Mary and the Magna Mater, so that the sub-title of the book, "From Cybele to the Virgin Mary", is pointless.

[64] Young 1979, 97ff.; Stroumsa 2005, 130–39.

sphere), and in the iconographic use of gestures such as the offering of libation and incense to connote or allude to animal-sacrifice. As for content or claim, with its notion of an unique sacrifice of universal import, a sacrifice reproduced, not literally but mimetically or allusively, in the ritual practice of the initiates, Mithraism had already produced a heavily allegorical reading of sacrifice. If we argue that Christianity turned pagan ritual inside-out to become the redemptive self-sacrifice of Christ celebrated in the Eucharist, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the idea of substitutionary self-sacrifice was itself taken over from Graeco-Roman themes.[65]

From a distance, then, all this can be seen as a break or rupture, but it is better understood as a shift of symbolic meaning within an existing frame of reference. New religious appetites want something new, not something old and obvious. As Augustine says: *Sacrificium ergo uisibile inuisibilis sacrificii sacramentum id est sacrum signum est*, "A sacrifice, therefore, is the visible sacrament or sacred sign of an invisible sacrifice" (*De civ. Dei* 10.5). In other words, although the symbolism of Christian (self-)sacrifice seems new, it does not represent a clean break with sacrificial practice. Christian language is thus not a radical replacement for sacrifice.[66] The latter was so deeply rooted in Mediterranean religious practice that Christianity was often forced to compromise by integrating

[65] Christian views of sacrifice an be followed in the old diachronic study by E.O. James, *Sacrifice and Sacrament* (London 1962); Christianity as a sacrificial religion: J. Daly, *The Idea of Christian Sacrifice* (Chicago 1977); cf. E. Ferguson, Spiritual Sacrifice in Early Christianity and Its Environment, *ANRW* II.23.2 (1980) 1151–1189; S.W. Sykes, Sacrifice in the New Testment and Christian Theology, in M.F.C. Bourdillon and M. Fortes (eds.), *Sacrifice* (London 1980) 61–83. Graeco-Roman themes: H.S. Versnel, Quid Athenis et Hierosolymis? Bemerkungen über die Herkunft von Aspekten des 'Effective Death', in J.W. Van Henten (ed.), *Die Entstehung der jüdischen Matryrologie.* Studia Post-Biblica 38 (Leyden 1989) 162–96; idem, Making Sense of Jesus' Death: The Pagan Contribution, in J. Frey and J. Schröter (eds.), *Deutungen des Todes Jesu im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen 2002) 213–94.

[66] Stroumsa 2005, 137: "ambiguïté qui nous impose de définir judaïsme et christianisme comme des religions sacrificielles sans sacrifices sanglantes". Elsner 1995, 240 suggests that the real change brought about by Christianity here was to undercut the reciprocal relation that was central to pagan sacrifice, in that the good Christian turns himself into a sacrificial victim. This leads him to defend the thesis of a radical break in the representation of sacrifice, but we should not forget that this claim is based on selected images (S. Apollinare Nuovo) where the relation to divinity is idealised. In general, the imagery of the martyrs does not aim to separate them from the mass of the faithful; and there is a great deal of evidence to indicate that the latter continued to see their relation to God in reciprocal terms. Elsner also fails to take account of the fact that Christian notions of sacrifice were based on Jewish and Graeco-Roman ones, and that the Eucharist draws on the whole gamut of pagan ideas (Young 1979).

it into its ritual, thus perfectly illustrating the décalage between theoretical claims and religious praxis.[67]

It has however also been argued that in Christianity language became for the first time a means of expressing a deep personal relation of faith in the deity. By comparison with traditional religious practice, this is probably the case. As I have already pointed out, however, we find in the Late Hellenistic and Imperial periods a new style of communication with the deity, a style associated with the old *devotio in fidem* of the Italic populations conquered in the early- and mid-Republican expansion. The religious imagination uses the language of slavery to express a deep, voluntary submission.[68] This style was picked up by the oriental cults before becoming characteristic of Christianity (Alvar 1999). It can be seen as a break with past practice, but in my view is better understood as the culmination of a process in which one could entertain a whole variety of relations with divinity, even antagonistic ones. In the mysteries, for example, we find not only prayers where the speaker claims to be the slave of his chosen god but also the expression of outright coercion of the kind we usually associate with magic. The same range of utterance can be found in the Christianities. To pursue this however would take us too far afield into the underlying issues of worshippers' attitudes, feelings and willingness to experiment.

One relatively clear case of borrowing from the wider pagan culture is the ritual calendar. It seems clear that Christianity organised its annual cycle of rituals in relation to the seasons, which patterned most (ancient) religions. This must have been a matter of conscious policy: once imposed on the population, post-Nicene Christianity modelled its religious calendar on the cycle of pagan festivals in order to suggest, quite misleadingly of course, that it was sympathetic to such naturalistic conceptions of the world. However, although the oriental cults too had their cyclic religious festivals, there is no reason to think that they provided any specific pattern or model. The claims to the contrary are more likely to rest on mere coincidence: the Roman calendar was simply littered with religious festivals, so that it is virtually impossible

[67] E.g. D. Trout, Christianizing the Nolan Countryside: Animal Sacrifice at the Tomb of St. Felix, *JECS* 3 (1995) 280–298.

[68] See Pleket 1981; also F.T. Van Straten, Images of Gods and Men in a Changing Society: Self-identity in Hellenistic Religion, in A. Bulloch (ed.), *Images and Ideologies: Self-Definition in the Hellenistic World. Papers presented at a Conference held April 7–9, 1988 at the University of California at Berkeley*. Hellenistic Culture and Society 12 (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1993) 248–64.

that Christian festivals should fail to fall on the same day as one or other of them.[69] Some have seen the Christian pattern as mediated by the Jewish calendar, even though there is not a single Jewish date in all the Jewish evidence from Rome, where the Jews seem simply to have adopted the Roman calendar.[70] We cannot tell whether the March festival in the cult of Cybele and Attis influenced the celebration of Christian Easter (which is however not a fixed but a movable festival). Three days separated Christ's death from his resurrection, reckoning inclusively, as in the case of Osiris.[71] Some say the Lord's Day was celebrated on Sunday because that was the *Dies Solis*, the day of the Sun, which in turn had something to do with Mithraism. Not only is the seven-day week (the Romans had had an eight-day week for centuries) as a measurement of time the product of complicated juggling with the planetary chronocrators, which only caught on in the third century, it seems out of the question that Mithraism should have celebrated weekly meetings when such religious associations were, so far as we know, limited to one meeting a month, a rule the Christians deliberately flouted.[72] Anyway, what are such coincidences supposed to prove?

A great deal of discussion has arisen over the day that came to be designated as Christ's birthday, 25th December. This date is of course unknown in Early Christianity; the eastern church celebrated the birth on what is now Epiphany, 6th January. There are two quite different issues here, though they are often confused: the supposed date of the birth of Mithras, and the creation of the state-cult of Sol Invictus. Thanks to Cumont, and perhaps even more to Frazer, it is widely believed by those who know nothing of the matter that the birth of Mithras was celebrated on the same day, 25th December.[73] It is fatiguing

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[69] Cf. J. Rüpke, *Kalender und Öffentlichkeit: Die Geschichte der Repräsentation und religiösen Qualifikation von Zeit in Rom*. RGVV, 40 (Berlin 1995); 2006, 68–84.

[70] Cf. J. Rüpke, Transferring Religious Structure: Observations on Judaism, Iuppiter Dolichenus and other Oriental cults in Rome, in A. Bendlin (ed.), *Religion and Culture in the Eastern Parts of the Roman Empire* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, forthcoming).

[71] In the case of the Phrygian cults, the Calendar of Filocalus (*CIL* 1² p. 260) gives the date of the *Arbor intrat* as 22nd March and the *Hilaria* as 25th, i.e. four days counting inclusively. At that period, Sol entered Aries on 18th March.

[72] On the planetary week, cf. F.H. Colson, *The Week: an Essay on the Origin and Development of the Seven-Day Cycle* (Cambridge 1926, rep. Westport 1974); Beck 1988, 8f.; Rüpke 2006, 167–71.

[73] Cumont, *TMMM* 1, 342 n. 4; 1929, 206 n. 3; Frazer 1914, 1: 302–05. On the wider theme of Christ identified as the Sun (mainly of justice, however), cf. F. Dölger, *Sol salutis: Gebet und Gesang in christlichen Altertum. Mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Ostung*

to have to clear away such mountains of continuously-repeated misconception and error.[74] There is no evidence of any kind, not even a hint, from within the cult that this, or any other winter day, was important in the Mithraic calendar. Although three seasonal zodiacal signs are singled out in the iconography (Taurus, Leo and Scorpius), Aquarius, the sign that would correspond to notional mid-winter, being diametrically opposite to Leo, is never paid special attention.[75] No Mithraic votive is dated 25th December (VIII A.D. KAL. IAN.). Nor is there any mention among the dipinti in the mithraeum of S. Prisca of Mithras' birthday, though the first line of a zodiacal poem was written up on the wall, starting, quite conventionally, with Aries, the first sign of Spring.[76] We have surely heard enough in this context about arguments from silence.

The speculation about Mithras' birthday is based on an entry in the mid fourth-century Calendar of Filocalus, whose entry for 25th Dec.

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in Gebet und Liturgie (Munich 1925); S.E. Hijmans, Christus of Sol, *Lampas* 30 (1997) 371–85. The traditional festivals of the Sun were on 8/9th August, 17th October (later, 19th) and probably 11th December (Hijmans 1996, 117 n. 16). No festival of the Sun appears under 25th December in the Republican or Augustan calendars. I may here say something briefly about the claim that both Mithras and Christ were born in a cave (cf. Lease 1980, 1321). Apart from the doubtful *Epist. Barnab*. 11, the earliest references are Justin, *Dial. Tryph*. 78.5 and an apocryphal source, *The Protevangelium of James* 18.1, of about the same date. Origen, *Contra Cels*. 1.51 says that in his day both cave and stable were pointed out to pilgrims in Bethlehem. It is a complete *petitio principii* to think that Mithras was supposed to have been born in a cave: the cave belongs to the tauroctony, not the birth. Images such as V. 1593 (Poetovio III, mid III^{p}) represent a rocky hillside *vel sim*. not a cave. Thus Justin rightly separates his statement that Mithras was born from a rock from the Mithraic initiations in a cave (*Dial. Tryph*. 70.1). The arguments adduced by M. Gervers, The Iconography of the Cave in Christian and Mithraic Tradition, in Bianchi 1979, 579–96 in favour of the idea that Mithras was born in a cave (= universe) are completely specious.

[74] A good recent discussion in S.E. Hijmans, *Sol invictus*, the Winter Solstice and the Origins of Christmas, *Mouseion* (Canada) 3.3 (2003) 377–98. Clauss' emphasis on the theme of the Sun as one shared between Mithraism and Christianity seems to me misplaced (1986, 272–9).

[75] At the time of the Calendar of Filocalus (mid-fourth century), 25th December fell on the eighth day after the Sun entered Capricorn: *CIL* 1^{2} p. 278. This constellation too is conspicuous by its absence in the Mithraic evidence.

[76] Line 13: *primus et hic aries astrictius ordine currit* = Sanzi 2003, 439: Mithras no. 26.1. Vermaseren completely missed the point here. The poem evidently drew special attention to the symbolic meaning of the cave as the universe, which is connoted iconographically on the reliefs by depicting the signs (always from left to right) over the cave in which Mithras kills the bull. The zodiac is simply a pictorial representation of the Sun's regular annual progression through the universe.

reads: Ñ. INVICTI C.M. XXX, *natalis (Solis) Invicti; c(ircenses) m(issus) XXX*.[77] Now in the surviving calendars of imperial date there are many entries recording the sacrifices commemorating the birthdays of members of the various dynasties; in the calendar of Filocalus, though not earlier, these are denoted by Ñ followed by the name of the person. Cumont, who was not an expert on the late Roman calendar and was following a conventional claim here, accordingly assumed that Ñ. INVICTI in this case too meant 'birthday', i.e. the birthday of the unconquerable Sun, taken to be the equivalent of Mithras. But in the Calendar of Filocalus there are a good number of entries where Ñ is followed by the name of a god, such as Mars, Diana, Asclepius, Hercules or the Muses; and in these cases *natalis* is the technical term for the date on which the relevant public temple was dedicated, or the corresponding festival celebrated.[78] It follows that *natalis Solis invicti* refers to the dedication by the emperor Aurelian in AD 274 of his grand temple of Sol Invictus, the deity in whose honour he created a new priestly college, the *pontifices Solis* (*HA Aurel.* 35.3; 39.2). The word has nothing whatever to do with the idea of 'birthday'. The earliest evidence that 25th December was considered to be the date of the Sun's birthday is a passage of Julian, written almost 90 years after Aurelian, and seems to be based on a popular confusion of the technical word *natalis* with its more common meaning.[79]

The temple was evidently constructed during the year 274, which Aurelian spent largely in Rome. But he must have known that trouble was brewing in Gaul and on the Rhine, for very early in January 275 he set out to suppress what seems to have been local resistance/banditry in the aftermath of the rebellion of Postumus and Tetricus, and relieved the Alaman siege of Augst, before assembling troops in Illyricum and moving on towards Byzantium, where he intended to take ship for Syria. His major aim, planned during 274, was to avenge the

[77] *CIL* 1² p. 278. *Circenses missus XXX* refers to the number of seven-lap races (*missus*, 4th decl.) during the games associated with the festival. 30 was the highest number, otherwise accorded only to Jupiter. The norm was 24.

[78] Feb. 1: Hercules: *CIL* 1² p. 258; March 1: Mars; 21: Minerva: *CIL* 1² p. 260; April 3: deus Quirinus: *CIL* 1² p. 262; May 15: *Ludi Ñ Mercuri*; 18: Annona: *CIL* 1² p. 264; June 13: Musae: *CIL* 1² p. 266; Aug. 3: Diana: *CIL* 1² p. 270; Sept. 11: Asclepius: *CIL* 1² p. 272. See in general the excellent accounts of Stern 1953 and M.R. Salzman, *On Roman Time: The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity*. The Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 17 (Berkeley, CA 1990).

[79] Julian, *Or.* 4.155d–56b. The later Christian texts, none of which has any authority regarding this question, are cited by Th. Mommsen ap. *CIL* 1² p. 278.

defeat and death of Valerian at the hands of the Sasanians. But he had to stay in Rome until 31st December to swear his oath as consul for 275, and attend the *Senatus legitimus* on 1st Jan.[80] The choice of 25th December was in fact under-determined. There were practical considerations: the temple was unfinished, Aurelian had to leave Rome, so the inauguration was fixed as late as possible, immediately after the major Roman winter holiday-period, the Saturnalia, which at this time lasted from 17th-23rd Dec. If we extrapolate from the calendar from Venusia (Venosa) of 4 CE, which sets the summer solstice on 26th June, we could infer that the winter solstice, at any rate nearly three hundred years before Aurelian, was believed to fall around the corresponding date in December (unfortunately only the months of May and June survive).[81] In the Calendar of Filocalus, some 80 years later than Aurelian, the date of the summer solstice is given as 24th June (*CIL* 1^2 p. 266). By implication, 25th December fell into a time-bracket connected with the Sun's cycle, and was thus symbolically appropriate for the dedication.[82]

It is now understood that the emperors had a close ideological and iconographic relation to the Sun from the time of Augustus (the basic iconography is Hellenistic of course), and there is nothing remotely 'oriental' about it. Quite apart from that, Henri Seyrig demolished Cumont's entire Syrian-solar hypothesis almost forty years ago.[83] The

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[80] Cf. E. Groag, s.v. Domitius no. 36, *RE* 5 (1903) 1347–1419 at 1400–02; Watson 1999, 189ff.

[81] *CIL* 1^2 p. 221. As a matter of fact, it is difficult to gauge the precise date of the solstice, since there is a period of around two weeks during which the Sun's position at sun-rise hardly seems to budge at all.

[82] On a bronze clepsydra (2nd half II^p–1st half III^p) allegedly found in the Rhine in the 1960s and now in the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Frankfurt a. M., there is an inscription listing the months and the three marker days in each: kalends, ides, nones. Also marked are *Aeq(uinoctium)* in March and September, and *Sol(stitium)* (the summer solstice), which is the sole dated point: *VIII k(al. Iulias)* = 25 June. At the end of the December list we find *Br(uma)*, without a date, but presumably we should supply *VIII k(al. Ianuar.)* = 25 December: D. Stutzinger, *Eine römische Wasserauslaufuhr*. Patrimonia 195 (Frankfurt 2001), reading *br(evitas)*; the reading *Br(uma)* is due to J. Gascou ap. *AE* 2003: 1279a.

[83] Hijmans 1996 is a fundamental and welcome attack by an archaeologist on the entire construct of an 'oriental' sun-god, esp. the views of G.H. Halsberghe, *The Cult of Sol Invictus*. EPROER 23 (Leyden 1972); cf. Berrens 2004. Syrian gods not primarily solar: H. Seyrig, Antiquités syriennes, 95: Le culte du Soleil en Syrie à l'époque romaine, *Syria* 48 (1971) 337–73; idem, Le prétendu syncrétisme solaire syrien, in AA.VV., *Les syncrétismes dans les religions grecque et romaine*. Centre de Recherche d'Histoire des Religions, Université de Strasbourg (Leyden 1973) 147–52.

emperors had their own independent interest here: the Sun has an elective affinity with autocracy. The adjective *invictus* represents the fusion of this motif of (self-styled) beneficent autocracy with that of the theology of imperial victory, itself one of the grandest and most insistent themes of imperial self-presentation.[84] *Sol invictus* is thus the heavenly counterpart of the triumphant autocrat. Although Aurelian's murder, probably in March 275, entailed the abolition of the *pontifices Solis*, the state-cult of Sol continued alongside that of IOM Iuppiter. That is surely why Diocletian, now the most senior of the *seniores Augusti*, and the four ruling tetrarchs, whose coinage includes the legend *Soli invicto*, dedicated an altar to Mithras as *fautor imperii sui* at Carnuntum on the occasion of their conference in the city in November AD 308.[85] They were assimilating Mithras, here called Deus Sol Invictus Mithras, to Aurelian's cult, as we know was also done at Novae, where a mithraeum was turned into a temple of Sol invictus in, probably, the 270s.[86]

Baptism and communion are two other important issues here. Little can be said about the first. Baptism was considered to be the equivalent of initiation into the mysteries: those who had not been through it could not be more than mere onlookers at the rites. The identification of Christian baptism with initiation started in Christian contexts: the passage of Paul cited earlier in this chapter (p. 395) seems so close to the simile of death that we find in the Stobaean fragment of Plutarch's *De anima* cited on p. 112 as to make it likely that he was thinking of initiation. But there is no reason to think of a genetic rather than a structural connection. Scholars have also claimed that Isiac purifications were a precedent for Christian baptism.[87] The analogy does not seem sufficiently close to warrant pursuing. Nor do we need to discuss

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[84] J. Rufus Fears, The Theology of Victory at Rome. Approaches and Problems, *ANRW* II.17.2 (1981) 736–826; idem, Herrscherkult, *RfAC* 14 (1988) 1047–93; M. Bergmann, *Die Strahlen der Herrscher: Theomorphes Herrscherbild und politische Symbolik im Hellenismus und in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Mainz 1998) 267–81; Berrens 2004, 184–98.

[85] *CIL* III 4413 = *ILS* 659 = V.1698. It is not otherwise dated, and certainly tells us nothing about the date of Mithras' birth. For the legend on the Tetrarchs' coinage, esp. at Trier, in Asia Minor and at Antioch, see *RIC* 6 (1973) 56, 65, 72 and the issues listed on p. 704 s.v. *Soli invicto* etc. Hijmans has calculated that there was an emission with an image of Sol every year from 229–68 (1996, 137).

[86] Naïdenova 1994; eadem, Nouvelles évidences sur le culte de Sol Augustus à Novae (Mésie Inférieure), in E. Frézouls and H. Jouffroy (eds.), *Les empereurs illyriens. Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg, 1990* (Strasbourg 1998) 173.

[87] Cook 1925, 1: 303–05; Pettazzoni 1955, 665; R.J. Witt, Isis-Hellas, *PCPhS* 191 (1965) 64f.; J.R. Hinnells, Christianity and the Mystery Cults, *Theology* (London) 48 (1968) 20.

the *tauro-/criobolium* again, which has assumed a quite disproportionate place in this context.

Communion is more complex, since the analogies were set out by Tertullian, *De praescr. haer.* 40.4 and Firmicus Maternus, *De errore* 18.2.[88] Of course there is no known parallel in the mysteries to the practice of eating the god.[89] However, it took place in the larger context of religious commensality, itself a well-nigh universal practice. The similarity between communion and the collective meals of initiates seemed obvious to Christian writers, though for us it is Christian theophagy that seems quite exceptional. It has been claimed that there is a parallel in the cult of Mithras, but there is not a shred of evidence that sacrificial meat in the cult was considered a manifestation of, or symbolic substitute for, the deity.[90] Our information about the Mithraic banquet is in fact too poor to allow ourselves the luxury of attempting to reconstruct it by appeal to the Eucharist.[91] This has been a common method, which has produced wholly predictable results.

There is however one feature that Christianity shares with Mithraism by contrast with the other cults, and that is the god's participation in the

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[88] For the older discussion, see W.R. Halliday, *The Pagan Background of Early Christianity* (London 1925); A. Loisy, Les origines de la cène eucharistique, *Congrès d'histoire du christianisme* (Paris 1928) 95; Angus 1929, 85; W.W. Hyde, *Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Philadelphia 1946) 66.

[89] As I mentioned in Chap. 4.2c. But it is just worth noting here how the Eucharist became the foundation of the pagan belief that the Christians were cannibals, cf. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 1–13, comm. G.W. Clarke, *The Octavius of Minucius Felix* (New York 1976). Both S. Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (London 1985) 54ff. and A. McGowan, Eating People: Accusations of Cannibalism against Christians in the Second Century, *JECS* 2 (1994) 413–42 are against the idea that the accusation derives from the theology. However, the intelligent selection of texts from Homer to Melville on the symbolic significance of cannibalism, with an eye cocked for Freud, by M. Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation* (Princeton 1990) favours it.

[90] R. Merkelbach, Vertrag und Opfer in der Religion des Mithras, in de Boer and Edridge 1978, 759ff. argued that just as at the level of myth (represented in the tauroctony) sacrifice, banquet and contract were linked, in that the *dexiosis* of Mithras and Helios was affirmed sacramentally by eating the meat of the bull, so the solidarity of the initiates with one another and the god was underwritten by the banquet that followed the sacrifice. But that is not the same as saying that the Mithraists believed that their piglets and chickens 'were' the primordial bull, let alone Mithras.

[91] M. Meslin, Convivialité ou communion sacramentelle? Repas mithriaque et eucharistie chrétienne, in A. Benoit, M. Philonenko and C. Vogel (eds.), *Mélanges M. Simon: Paganisme, Judaïsme, Christianisme* (Paris, 1978) 295–305 rightly argues that we can say nothing about the symbolic significance of what the Mithraists ate at their meals, as opposed to what Sol and Mithras ate, which was clearly the meat of the bull. Clauss 1986, 267–72 is quite uncritical of Christian 'information' about Mithraism.

sacrifice. In traditional pagan sacrifice the deity was the passive recipient of the offering, whose flesh was distributed more or less generously among the participants (or sold in the market). By contrast Christ and Mithras took a direct part in the sacrifice, one as the victim, the other as the sacrificant. I happen to believe that the difference is not as great as has been made out (e.g. Elsner 1995, 216), since structurally what is important is that the offering made in each case was for a particular purpose, in the one case redemption, in the other salvation.[92] How this was effected is secondary.

One argument against finding analogies between Christian rituals and those of oriental cults is to urge that, although they were outwardly similar, they diverged over the issue of their sacramental character. It is of course difficult to define sacrament (the Latin *sacramentum* is the equivalent, but not a translation, of μυστήριον), since its meaning has changed so greatly, from the sense of an oath made by both parties to a lawsuit in vindication of their claims, to the oath of loyalty given by a soldier to his commander or city,[93] to charged symbol, to something secret or mysterious that binds a person to God, to the revelation of the Christian Gospel.[94] Setting aside the later Christian meanings, we can say that one reason for calling the mysteries sacramental is their attempt to explain the arcane. Tertullian for example describes members of the grade Leo as being interpreted allegorically as *aridae et ardentis naturae sacramenta*, "symbols of the dry and fiery principle in nature" (*Adv. Marc.* 1.13.5).[95] The mysteries also involved an association with divinity,

[92] It may be, as Elsner urges on the previous page, that what deifies is action. However, the role played by the divinity is secondary, is simply the means whereby the human race can share in the divine glory.

[93] In one of Tertullian's three passages that mention *sacramentum* in connection with Mithraism, *De corona* 15.4, the word clearly means 'military oath', cf. P. Beskow, Tertullian on Mithras, in Hinnells 1994, 51–60. Cf. the apostates' declaration to Pliny in Bithynia: *Adfirmabant… seque sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere, de ne furta ne latrocinia ne adulteria committerent…*: Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.7. It is this oath that provided the basis for the Christian exploration of the metaphoric possibilities of the Latin word.

[94] Cf. E. Ruffini and E. Lodi, Mysterion e sacramentum, in *La sacramentalità negli scritti dei padri e nei testi liturgici primitivi* (Bologna 1987). The word *sacramentum* was evoked in many different directions, which is one reason why its metaphorical shifts are difficult to grasp. For example, we can see the sense of the word shifting from the actual oath in the law-court, through the traditional expression *iusto sacramento*, on equal terms, to the abstract meaning 'jurisdiction' in Apuleius, *Met.* 3.3: *Sed providentia deum… mane praestolatus ad gravissimum iudicii vestri sacramentum eum curavi perducere.*

[95] Of course we cannot assume that the word was used by the Mithraists in this sense. *On sacramentum* in Tertullian, see E. de Bacher, *Sacramentum. Le mot et l'idée presentée par lui dans les oeuvres de Tertullien* (Louvain 1911) 43–112; J. de Ghellink (ed.), *Pour l'histoire du*

that, at least in the later period, could not easily be repudiated.[96] It is in these senses that we can say that mystery initiation was sacramental in nature. Further we cannot go. Modern scholars try to establish, or refute, the existence of a 'Christian' element in the practice of the oriental mysteries,[97] but in fact the Christians living alongside these cults would themselves have been quite incapable of defining the sacramental in Christianity, or the rituals that illustrated it, with any clarity. This is of course one of the major battle-grounds in Church history.

We should therefore try to limit the word's meaning to those current in our period. It is really enough to cite Augustine's definition: *signa, cum ad res divinas pertinent, sacramenta appellantur* (*Epist.* 138). Here we find all the ideas associated with the word. The notion of oath has developed into the idea of personal agreement or contract with God that one cannot unilaterally repudiate, with the additional idea of secrecy concerning sacred matters, which is of course fundamental to the mysteries.[98] There is really no alternative but to accept that the mysteries were sacramental and that they shared this idea with Early Christianity.[99] In the course of time, however, the word acquired specifically Christian accretions

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mot "sacramentum" (Louvain 1924); A. Kolping, *Sacramentum Tertullianeum I: Untersuchungen über die Anfänge des christlichen Gebrauchs des Vokabel Sacramentum* (Regensburg and Münster 1948); Kelly 1989, 193ff.; T. Burgos, Concepto de *sacramentum* en Tertuliano, *Helmantica* 10 (1959) 227–256. For the word in Lactantius: V. Loi, Per la storia del vocabolo *sacramentum*: *Sacramentum* in Lattanzio, *VChr.* 28 (1964) 85–107.

[96] Cf. the metaphorical use of the word in Apuleius, *Socr.* 22: *in sui dico daemonis cultum, qui cultus non aliud quam philosophiae sacramentum est*, i.e. worship as an initiation into philosophy.

[97] Cf. Nock, 1962, 194. His rejection of the idea that there might be some interference between the Christian view of sacrament and the mysteries is surely based more on his subjective feeling than on an objective look at the materials he assembles.

[98] Cf. Apuleius, *Met.* 3.26, where Lucius, as an ass, vainly puts his trust in the hope *si quod inesset mutis animalibus tacitum ac naturale sacramentum*, i.e. an unspoken bond of allegiance between dumb animals. Tertullian, *De praescr. haer.* 40.2 (= Sanzi 2003,414: Mithras 5.3) is instructive, since he uses the word specifically in relation to the mysteries as a diabolic imitation of Christianity: *[Diabolus]… qui ipsas quoque res sacramentorum divinorum mysteriis aemulatur*, '…who even imitates key Christian institutions in the mysteries'. He proceeds to list baptism, lustration, signing on the forehead, communion, resurrection and martyrdom. By the time of Ammianus 15.7.7, the expression *a sacramento removere* means to eject from a sacred office.

[99] I revert here to the position of Angus 1929, 76, who calls the mysteries 'sacramental religions', cf. Nock 1939, 445 on sacramental experiences in paganism. Some good remarks on the theme by R.L. Beck, The Mysteries of Mithras, in J.S. Kloppenborg and S.G. Wilson (eds.), *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (London 1996) 176–185. I myself would now want also to emphasise the oriental cults' insistence that the new self could only develop through adherence to the ethical norms they established.

of meaning. The desire to keep early-Christian and mystery sacramentalism apart is pure ideology. In my view, the differences between the Christianities and the oriental cults are no greater than those between each of the latter themselves. However, the new apologetics has invented another idea to preserve the originality of Christianity here, which we may call 'reverse borrowing'. It is best described as a modern variant of Justin's idea of diabolic imitation.

5. From Reverse Borrowing to 'Commensality'

The argument simply denies that all pagan practice is prior to Christianity. In antiquity even the Christians believed this, and the assumption that paganism is always prior underlies both Dupuis' entire argument and that of the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule. The discussion since then has established, among other things, that the evidence for the oriental cults prior to the late Republic/early Empire contains no reference to the themes emphasised in the Christian critique. We need to confront the fact that Christianity and the mysteries developed together, in tandem. Going a little further, we can make the point that in fact the Christian texts are in almost every case prior to the pagan texts used to prove the priority of the mysteries. The combatants have in fact switched positions.

Already in the early days of the controversy some authors, such as Cumont, had accepted that the mysteries sometimes took over aspects of Christian usage, for example the elaboration of the April festival of Attis at the time of Easter.[100] Yet this issue never became central to the debate until the 1960s. Vermaseren's claimed reading of l. 14 at S. Prisca: *et nos servasti eternali sanguine fuso*, which has since turned out to be imaginary except for the last two words, appeared in 1965 (p. 135). Duthoy's more striking claim that the supposed final phase of the taurobolium, the rain of blood, had been introduced under the influence of Christian baptism, appeared in 1969.[101] It was not considered out of the question that such a shift, which was supposed to have taken place around AD 300, might have been inspired by the

[100] F. Cumont, *Lux Perpetua* (Paris 1949) xi. Among older scholars who accepted the idea that the mysteries borrowed here and there from Christianity, we may cite Prümm 1954, 313ff.; Andrews 1958, 58f.

[101] Duthoy 1969, 121; Hepding 1903, 200 had already argued that the taurobolium acquired its redemptive character as a result of Christian influence.

Christian idea of baptism by immersion, especially in combination with a theological shift away from emphasis on the death of Attis towards his reunion with Cybele.[102] But, as we saw in the previous chapter, the entire scenario has now collapsed with the recognition that the 'rain of blood' is Prudentius' fantasy and bears no relation to the performance of the actual *tauro-/criobolium* at any historical moment. Since both these have turned out to be illusory, I hardly need press the point that it would be wise to be just as circumspect about 'reverse borrowing' as about the old claims of the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule.[103]

The idea that a new cult should have set itself up as a copy of another and imitate its system of beliefs and rituals so as to improve its chances in the market does not strike one as sensible. This argument works both ways, of course. It was effective of A.D. Nock to argue that one could hardly take seriously the idea that Paul "might have listened attentively to Stoic lectures in Tarsus or conducted enquiries about Mithraism in order to pad Christianity out with ideas taken from such sources" (1933b, 139). But the point would apply equally to the mysteries vis à vis Christianity. Culture-contact does not work like this: Paul shaved his head at Cenchreae, not Jerusalem. Without really intending to, we have come full circle back to Justin's diabolic imitation. That is exaggerated, of course, but it makes the point about the underlying dualism of 'reverse borrowing'.

The scenario would only be plausible from the point at which Christianity became a serious alternative sociologically speaking, that is, from when it began to be sufficiently attractive to the population of the Empire for the oriental cults to think it worth their while to modify their rituals or fit in the idea of a life after death. That is a matter of numbers. Demographically, the Christians began to be a serious force only in the third century.[104] It was as both groups expanded that their

[102] The exaltation of the eternal union of Cybele and Attis, which is really based on the modern reading of the Parabiago dish, is a good model for initiates, and can hardly be taken to replace or occlude Attis' earlier vicissitudes. The exaltation of death certainly was a useful form of propaganda for Christianity; but that should not lead us to demand that the adherents of the other cults enjoyed the same imagery.

[103] Cf. Alvar 1993b, 23ff. I am therefore surprised by the dualism of G.W. Bowersock's remark: "The tendency of Christian interpreters to look for the pagan origins of Christian rites, utterances and images has all too often obscured influences in the reverse direction": *Fiction as History. Nero to Julian* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1994) 127, as though we had to choose between just these two options.

[104] See the brilliantly suggestive piece by K. Hopkins, Early Christian Number and its Implications, *JECS* 6 (1998) 185–226.

mutual awareness grew. But the expansion itself was the result of the gradual adaptation of all these cults to the spiritual needs of their potential constituencies, which were themselves shifting under the influence of the politico-social conditions created by the Roman Empire. Despite the evidence for the continued vitality of civic religion stressed by MacMullen and Lane Fox, I believe that the combined effect of the mysteries and Christianity was indeed to weaken traditional religious practice. It was that process of decline that Decius was trying to halt by his famous decree of AD 250, one of whose effects was the first organised persecution of the Christians.[105]

With regard to the immediate issue, however, the most significant feature of the dominant religious climate seems to me the soteriological hopes or ambitions of the individual, hopes which are implied by the very existence of the various offers of a life after death where one would enjoy felicity. To attain that felicity, rituals were required that had a family resemblance to one another and encompassed a range of meanings that were individually different but generically similar. There was no need to borrow from or imitate other cults: given the broader context of religious contact in the Empire, all we need to postulate is a process of convergent adaptation to changing ideological and historical conditions (Alvar 1993b, 23ff.).

It is this idea of convergent adaptation that in my view best explains another similarity that is not generally cited in this context. At the Council of Nicaea in 325 it was decided that eunuchs were unacceptable as Christian clergy. Whatever the sanctity, and prophetic status, achieved by a castrato such as Melito of Sardis in the second half of the second century (Brown 1988, 68f.), literal eunuchism was now unacceptable.[106] This decision is interesting for at least two reasons. First, as almost everyone has pointed out, castration was evidently understood as a means of avoiding sexual temptation on the part of the clergy. It could therefore be seen as a radically effective means of fulfilling the vow to life-long chastity. Second, it is clear that the vow would lose its point once one had resolved to overcome sexual temptation by self-castration. By forbidding castration, the Nicene fathers were trying to increase the value of self-denial and so the personal sanctity

[105] It affected not only Christians but also members of other groups: J.B. Rives, The Decree of Decius and the Religion of Empire, *JRS* 89 (1999) 134–54; cf. Leppin 2007, 100f.

[106] For other decisions taken at Nicaea, see Leppin 2007, 104f.

of the individual member of the clergy. The contemporary inhabitants of the Empire, however, were familiar with the *galli* and *bellonarii* of the cults of the Mater Magna and Ma-Bellona, who had castrated themselves in order to obtain personal sanctity by imitating Attis, but also with the accusations of sexual perversion levelled against them by their opponents.[107] A further intention of the Nicene fathers was thus surely to distinguish the two types of clergy, Christian and Metroac, vigorously from one another.

Beyond that, the injunction may also have been a tacit disincentive to opportunism. It seems probable that, under the influence of the Edict of Milan in 313, which set pagan and Christian cult on the same footing and initiated a gradual improvement in the political status of Christians, marked for example by the right accorded them in 323 to accede to the highest magistracies of state, some members of the priesthoods of other cults attempted to maintain their social and economic status by going over to the newly ascendant cult. There is no evidence to support this, so far as I know, but I can certainly envisage members of the Metroac clergy, who had been attracted by the social advantage they thought attached to such emoluments, being interested in switching to analogous positions within Christianity now that it was on the rise. Of course this problem, if it was one, diminished as the social profile of Metroac cult diminished. All same the issue of priestly self-castration persisted in Christianity, as we can see from the canons of the Church edited by Dionysius Exiguus at the beginning of the sixth century.[108] All this indicates that the issue of eunuchs was of some importance in the fourth-century Church, issuing as it did from a larger context shared by those pagan religions of the period that insisted upon sexual purity on the part of their clergy.

Given all this, I do not think that the notion of borrowing (in either direction) is appropriate for the situation in the Roman Empire. It would be better to think in terms of 'commensality'. Each cult found the materials it required in the common trough of current ideas. Each took what it needed and adapted these elements according to its overall drift

[107] I refer again to the interesting passage of Basil of Caesarea, *De virg. tuenda* 61 cited above at p. 403 n. 52.

[108] Cf. Migne, *PG* 67, col. 94ff. The issue received a learned commentary by Cristóbal Justelo in his edition of 1643.

and design.[109] I have elsewhere termed these relations more formally 'transfers' (Martínez Maza and Alvar 1997). The aim of this coinage is to supersede the bad old language of borrowings, with its hegemonic implications of priority and indebtedness, by highlighting the general spiritual climate of the period, itself generated by a specific historical contingency. Because they developed in a similar religio-cultural context, all these cults show clear parallels to one another, even though Christianity in particular refused to accept the fact. These parallels are best understood as complex transfers both at the formal and the conceptual level.[110] The simple transactional model of borrowings, which assumes a dominant cult as donor, and a junior one in no position to do more than passively receive, cannot do justice to the complexity of the real-world situation. It takes for granted an asymmetrical relation, thereby sustaining the apologetic view of confrontation instead of using the comparative method as a means of adding to our scientific knowledge. 'Commensality' is simply another way of putting the point that Early Christianities were Graeco-Roman cults indeed.

[109] Cf. Wedderburn 1982, 829: "It is the common religious and philosophical culture [of primitive Christianity and the mystery-cults], rather than the differentia of the mystery-cults, which is the most fruitful source of enquiry"; also Clauss' observation in relation specifically to the cult of Mithras: "Most of the parallels between Mithraism and Christianity are part of the common currency of all mystery cults or can be traced back to common origins in the Graeco-oriental culture of the Hellenistic world. The similarities do not at all suggest mutual influence" (2000, 169).

[110] I incline still to accept much of what C. Ruch, L'eucharistie et les mystères païens, in *4 Settimana Internazionale di Etnologia Religiosa, Milano 1925* (Paris 1926) 326 has to say on this topic.

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PLATES

Plate 1. Reclining solar Attis dedicated by C. Cartilius Euplus, mid-IIp. From the Attideum of the Metroac complex at Ostia. VatMus MGP inv. no. 10785. Photo: Courtesy of the Vatican Museums.

Plate 2. Enthroned Serapis, with staff and Cerberus (so-called Bryaxis type). Roman, IIp. From the Macellum of Puteoli (Pozzuoli) = Malaise 1972b, 288 no. 23. Courtesy of Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli.

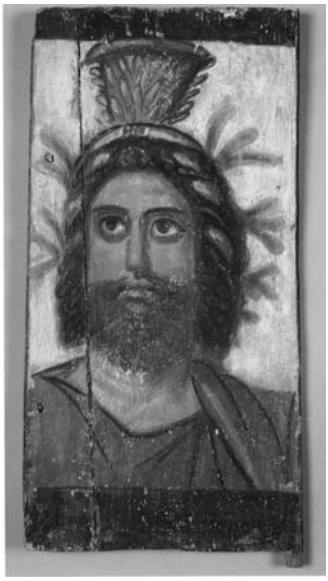

Plate 3. Wooden panel with painted image of Serapis wearing the *kalathos* (part of a triptych). Graeco-Egyptian, III^{P}. Provenance: unknown. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, inv. no. 74.AP.21. Photo: Museum.

Plate 4. Bronze statuette of Isis-Fortuna (h. 19 cm) wearing a complex head-dress (crown of Hathor) consisting of ears of grain, cow's horns, solar disc and twin feathers, and holding the cornucopiae and ship's steering-oar. Date: imperial. Provenance: unknown. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, inv. no. 71.AB.180. Photo: Museum.

Plate 5. Silver *lanx* from Parabiago, nr. Milan: Mater Magna and Attis in lion-car, with cosmic symbols. Date: IV^{p}. Photo: Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici per la Lombardia.

Plate 6. Pilaster-relief from Osterburken (Bauland, w. of Heidelberg), found in 1861. Date: c. AD 200. Photo of copy in Museum für Abgüsse klassischer Bildwerke, Munich.

Plate 7. Mithras hauling the captured bull into the cave (*Transitus dei*). From Mithraeum I, Poetovio (Spodnja Hajdina). Pokrainski Muzej, Ptuj. inv. no. RL 142. Late IIp. Courtesy of the Museum.

Plate 8. Damaged Lion-headed god, from the cachette discovered in 1902 on Cerro de St. Albin outside the ancient walls of Augusta Emerita (Mérida, Spain). Museo Nacional de Arte Romano de Mérida, inv. no. 87. Mid-IIp. Courtesy of the Museum.

Plate 9. Jupiter destroying the Giants. From Osterburken relief, left pilaster, fifth scene from bottom. Photo of copy in Museum für Abgüsse klassischer Bildwerke, Munich.

Plate 10. Mithras born from rock, supported by Cautes and Cautopates, with Saturnus sleeping above. Mithras holds the sword in his right hand, a torch in his left. From Mithraeum III, Poetovio. Pokrainski Muzej, Ptuj. inv. no. RL 296. III^{P}. Courtesy of the Museum.

Plate 11. Limestone relief from the Mithraeum of Absalmos (0.66 × 0.49 × 0.10m). Provenance: unknown, but apparently from Roman Syria. Inscr.: *AE* 1999: 1675 = *Bull.ép.* 2001: 481. Probably III^{p}. Israel Museum Collection, inv. no. 97.95.19. Courtesy of the Museum.

Plate 12. Altar showing Mithras carrying a lighted torch and riding the bull. Probably from Apulum (Alba Iulia, Romania). Brukenthal National Museum, Sibiu, inv. no. 7274. Courtesy of the Museum.

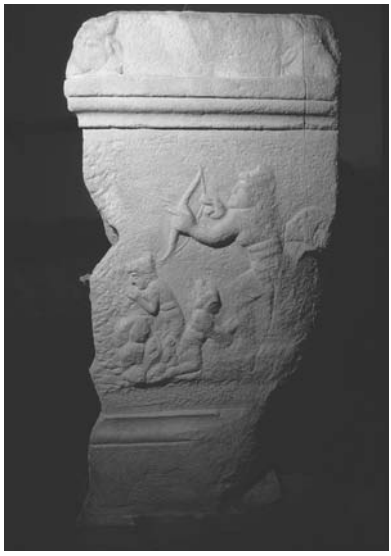

Plate 13. Mithras creating a life-giving spring out of the bare rock by shooting an arrow. Altar of Flavius Aper, *vir egregius et praepositus*. Mithraeum III, Poetovio. Mid-III^{p}. Pokrainski Muzej, Ptuj. inv. no. RL 293. Courtesy of the Museum.

Plate 14. The establishment of a natural cycle by Mithras: condensed allusions to the 'water-miracle' (bow and quiver) and the tauroctony (sword). Left lateral face of the same altar as in Pl. 13. Courtesy of Pokrainski Muzej, Ptuj.

Plate 15. Reverse of Mithraic relief from Konjic(a), Bosnia-Hercegovina: banquet of Mithras and Sol, with torchbearers and representative *Corax* and *Leo*. IV^{p}. Copy in former school-museum, Sarajevo. Photo: J.R. Hinnells.

Plate 16. Complex relief of M. Aurelius Euthices from Apulum (Alba Iulia, Romania). Brukenthal National Museum, Sibiu, inv. no. 7162. Photo: Museum.

Plate 17. The Twelve Gods. Osterburken relief, crown of cave-arch. Photo of copy in Museum für Abgüsse klassischer Bildwerke, Munich.

Plate 18. *Dexiosis* of Mithras and Sol. Osterburken relief, right pilaster, third scene from bottom. Photo of copy in Museum für Abgüsse klassischer Bildwerke, Munich.

Plate 19. Mithras and Sol roasting meat on a spit over an altar, with the raven (= *Corax*?) coming to eat. Note bull's haunch on the ground. Altar of Flavius Aper, *vir egregius et praepositus*. Mithraeum III, Poetovio. Mid-III^{p}. Pokrainski Muzej, Ptuj. inv. no. RL 293. Courtesy of the Museum.

Plate 20. Relief of dying Attis leaning against the pine-tree. Note the smaller tree behind. Glanum, Musée archéologique, St. Rémy de Provence, inv. no. 1186. Courtesy of Centre des Monuments Nationaux, Hôtel de Sade à St. Rémy de Provence.

Plate 21. Idealised procession in honour of Cybele: fresco from Via dell' Abbondanza, Pompeii. Courtesy of Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli.

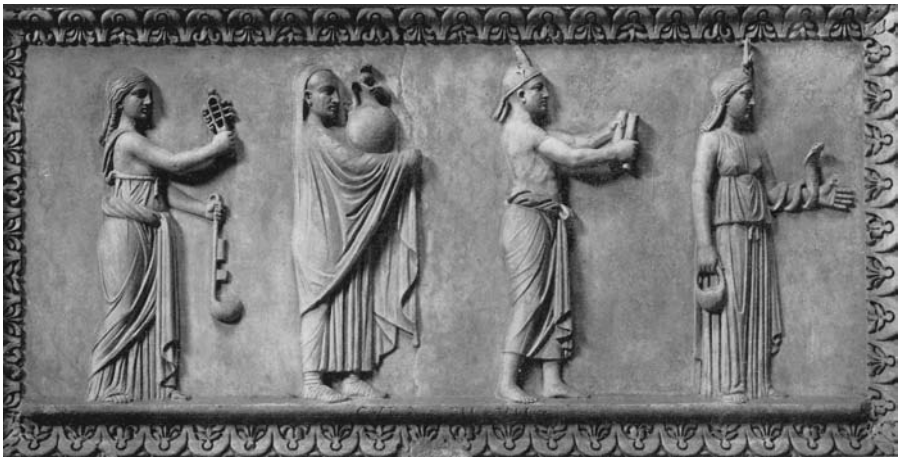

Plate 22. Relief panel showing four Isiac priests in procession. The hindmost priestess carries a *simpulum* for scattering Nile-water during the procession. Formerly in the Coll. Mattei = Helbig^4 1: 388f. no. 1491. Perhaps from Rome itself. Courtesy of the Vatican Museums.

Plate 23. Fresco depicting an Ethiopian performing a sacred dance on the steps of an Isiac temple decorated with palm branches and a crown. Herculaneum, 0.80 × 0.87m. Courtesy of Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli.

Plate 24. Beginning of an Isiac procession: a gilt *hydria* filled with Nile water is brought out of the temple by the προφήτης, while the worshippers waiting to take part sing and rattle their *sistra*. Herculaneum, 0.80 × 0.85m. Courtesy of Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli.

Plate 25. General view of the Mithraeum at S. Maria Capua Vetere.

Plate 26. View of Mithraeum I, Poetovio (Spodnja Hajdina), looking towards the cult-niche, with the votive altars and other furniture. Photo: Pokrainski Muzej, Ptuj.

Plate 27. Relief from Augusta Emerita, from a private house in town (Calle S. Francisco, no 2). Three banqueters at a table, flanked by two torch-bearers, and a servant with food. On the extreme left, probably Mithras' birth. Museo Nacional de Arte Romano de Mérida, inv. no. 127. Courtesy of the Museum.

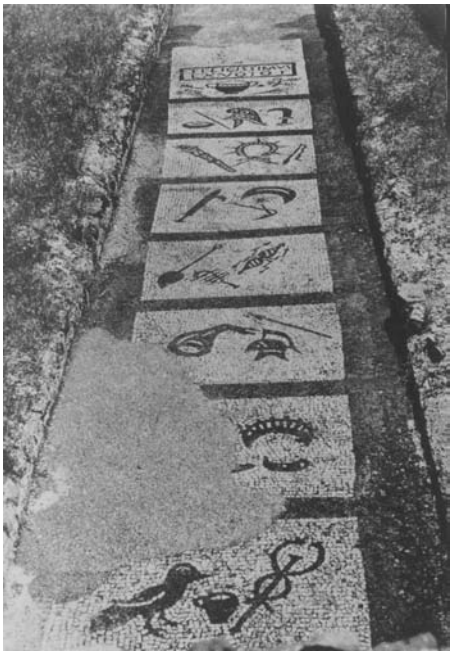

Plate 28. Floor mosaic of the mitreo di Felicissimo, Ostia, Reg.V. ins. 9, looking towards the cult niche (i.e. from the symbols for *Corax* to those of *Pater*). Mid-III^{p}. Photo: R. Gordon.

Plate 29. The 'Initiation' or 'Obeisance' of Sol. Osterburken relief, right pilaster, fourth scene from bottom. Photo of copy in Museum für Abgüsse klassischer Bildwerke, Munich.

Plate 30. Banquet of Mithras and Sol. Terra sigillata dish found in the Skt. Matthias Roman cemetery, Trier, in 1905 (diam. 0.175m). III^{p}. Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Trier, inv. no. 05.228. Courtesy of the Museum.

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Note that for pragmatic reasons there are no entries for: Attis, Cybele, Isis, Mater Magna, Mithras or Serapis. The reader should consult the Table of contents, or, on specific items, the Indexes of Inscriptions, papyri and monuments, or of Passages.

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